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主動調查報告
Direct Investigation Report

長者社區照顧服務券試驗計劃
Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly

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Executive Summary
Direct Investigation Report

Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly

Introduction

The Government's current elderly care policy is to promote "ageing in place as the core, institutional care as backup". Introduced in September 2013, the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly ("the Pilot Scheme") supports frail elderly persons to age in place under the "money-following-the-user" mode. With its second and third phases entered upon in October 2016 and October 2020 respectively, the Pilot Scheme has been in operation for about a decade. Based on their individual needs, holders of community care service vouchers ("CCS vouchers") can receive day care service and home care service offered by service providers recognised by the Social Welfare Department ("SWD").

2. The Government has continued to review the Pilot Scheme and take enhancement measures, which include increasing the number of CCS vouchers, adopting more flexible service modes and enlisting more organisations to provide services. Meanwhile, there are public views that some elderly persons have insufficient knowledge of the Pilot Scheme while some have never used the services with the vouchers they received. Government data show that between 2013/14 and 2020/21, the total quota of CCS vouchers increased from 1,200 to 8,000. Nevertheless, as at 2020/21, more than 20% of the total number of elderly persons receiving vouchers over the years had left the Pilot Scheme without ever using the services. Moreover, the scheme was still at the try-out stage despite long years of operation.

3. In view of the above, The Ombudsman launched this direct investigation to examine the operational arrangements for the Pilot Scheme, including its service planning, the workflow of processing applications, measures to assist elderly persons to select service providers, monitoring of service quality and utilisation rates, as well as promotion and publicity efforts for the services, and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement where necessary.

Our Findings

Applying for and Using CCS Vouchers

4. Elderly persons eligible for CCS vouchers must have been assessed and recommended for community care services ("CCS") or residential care services ("RCS") under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly

Services[1], and are waitlisted for subsidised CCS and/or RCS on the Central Waiting List for Subsidised Long Term Care ("LTC") Services ("Central Waiting List") without having received any kind of such services.

5. As at December 2022, the monthly floor and ceiling values of CCS vouchers were $4,210 and $10,070 respectively. Subject to their individual needs, elderly persons can purchase any service packages offered by recognised service providers ("RSPs") that are priced between the floor and ceiling voucher values. Subject to the voucher values, RSPs offer services to elderly persons on a monthly basis and apply to the Government for reimbursement of the actual costs. CCS voucher values are adjusted annually based on the Composite Consumer Price Index.

6. CCS are purchased in the mode of co-payment by voucher holders under the "affordable users pay" principle. Elderly persons who can afford less will receive more Government subsidies. The service package values include the amount of co-payment to be made by elderly users. SWD will determine the co-payment category of elderly persons by assessing their financial condition taking into account the household income of the elderly persons and their residing family members and with reference to the quarterly Median Monthly Domestic Household Income released by the Census and Statistics Department. There are six categories of co-payment ranging from 5% to 40% of the service package values.

7. Under the Pilot Scheme, there are three service delivery modes, namely day care centre service (centre-based mode), home care service (home-based mode) and centre-based and home-based service (mixed mode). The scope of services offered to CCS voucher holders includes rehabilitation exercise, nursing care, meal service, personal care, residential respite service, speech therapy service, etc. Voucher holders may switch RSPs depending on their needs without SWD's approval. Currently, there are about 250 RSPs operated by non-governmental organisations receiving Government subventions, non-profit-making organisations/social enterprises and private organisations having experience in providing care services for the elderly.

8. The Chief Executive has stated in the 2022 Policy Address that the Pilot Scheme will be regularised in the third quarter of 2023 and the number of beneficiaries will increase by 50% in phases, from 8,000 at present to 12,000 in 2025/26. The coverage of the Pilot Scheme will also be expanded to include rental of assistive technology products.

9. Having examined the work of SWD, we have the following comments and recommendations.

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[1] When applying for LTC services, elderly persons are required to undergo the Standardised Care Need Assessment by recognised assessors (including social workers, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, etc.). When the LTC needs of the elderly are ascertained, they will be matched with appropriate LTC services. CCS and RCS are two major types of subsidised LTC services.

The Pilot Scheme Has Been in Operation and under Review for Years

10. SWD first adopted the "money-following-the-user" mode in the Pilot Scheme, aiming to enhance services through market competition among RSPs. From the perspective of public finance, the principles of "money-following-the-user", "affordable users pay" and "co-payment" can help achieve financial sustainability of CCS. It has been almost a decade since the implementation of the Pilot Scheme. SWD explained that the market was not yet developed when the Pilot Scheme was initially introduced and there were not many RSPs. SWD had spent time to review the scheme and adopted various enhancement measures at different phases in order to explore how best to utilise the new mode and to enhance the scheme progressively.

11. In our opinion, as the operation of the Pilot Scheme is essentially different from that of traditional subsidised services, both the market and elderly persons needed time to understand and familiarise themselves with it. For the first and second phases of the Pilot Scheme, the Sau Po Centre on Ageing of The University of Hong Kong had indeed offered multiple views and suggestions, which were taken on board by SWD in formulating enhancement measures for the next phase of the scheme. Some of the measures such as extending the eligibility of RSPs to include private organisations, increasing the supply and diversity of services, expanding the coverage of the scheme from eight districts to all 18 districts throughout the territory and strengthening local collaboration could not be achieved immediately. Hence, we find it understandable for SWD to have taken a relatively long period of time to test the measures and operation of the Pilot Scheme for enhancement.

A Multi-pronged Approach Is Needed to Improve the Utilisation Rate

12. SWD's statistics showed that the utilisation rate, calculated as the percentage of the number of voucher holders actively using the services over the quota of vouchers, was around 60% in Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme, and that in Phase 3 increased from 59% in 2020/21 to 78% in 2021/22 and further to 86% as at the end of December 2022. The utilisation rate has been gradually improving, which should be attributable to the fact that since Phase 3, SWD has started to invite all eligible elderly persons on the Central Waiting List to apply for CCS vouchers and to issue more vouchers than the quota under the scheme. While the quota for Phase 3 was set at 8,000, there were 10,046 valid vouchers issued by SWD as at the end of December 2022, of which 6,851 were being used by participants to purchase services offered by RSPs. SWD's proactive steps to send invitation letters to eligible elderly persons and issue CCS vouchers have been effective in lifting the utilisation rates, thus better utilising the voucher quota. We find SWD's practice worthy of recognition.

13. On the other hand, our investigation revealed that many elderly persons waitlisted for LTC services on the Central Waiting List actually applied for CCS vouchers to meet potential needs before they were granted traditional subsidised services. In fact, this is in line with SWD's positioning of CCS vouchers as an additional option for elderly persons waitlisted for services on the Central Waiting List to receive

assistance with the CCS vouchers issued when necessary.

14. As SWD pointed out, RSPs apply for reimbursement of subsidies on an accountable basis under the Pilot Scheme. Unused CCS vouchers, therefore, will not waste public money or occupy resources of RSPs. We understand that unused CCS vouchers will not obstruct the turnover of vouchers or SWD's issuance of vouchers to elderly persons in need as long as the voucher holders do not outnumber the voucher quota. Nevertheless, for maintaining and even improving the utilisation rate of CCS vouchers, we consider that SWD should continue with its endeavours to encourage eligible elderly persons newly added to the Central Waiting List to apply for CCS vouchers, and regularly (e.g. once every year) approach those voucher holders who have not used the vouchers received. This would facilitate SWD's collation of information for analysis and identification of potential areas for service improvement, while enabling the Department to re-examine the elderly persons' service needs in collaboration with the responsible workers, so as to help them better utilise the vouchers, including choosing suitable RSPs or service packages.

15. We also recommend that SWD obtain from RSPs the waiting list for their services, approach other RSPs and the voucher holders on the list and attempt to make matching suggestions so that those elderly persons can receive necessary services as soon as possible.

16. Moreover, SWD indicated that it is exploring the feasibility of allowing voucher holders to purchase services from more than one RSP concurrently to allow more flexibility under the Pilot Scheme. The measure is expected to be implemented in the third quarter of 2023. We recommend that SWD expedite its study and test for early implementation so that elderly persons can enjoy services under the scheme more flexibly, thereby improving the utilisation rate of CCS vouchers.

Supply of Centre-based Services Should be Increased

17. According to SWD's information, RSPs offered a total of 12,689 home care service (home-based services) places in the third phase of the Pilot Scheme as at the end of December 2022. While there were a total of 4,712 elderly persons using home-based services and the mixed mode of centre-based and home-based services offered by RSPs in their respective districts, 4,323 elderly persons were waitlisted for home-based services on the Central Waiting List. We assume that the sum of these two types of elderly (i.e. 9,035 persons) represents the aggregate demand for home-based services. At present, the capacity of home-based services can abundantly accommodate the needs of voucher users and those on the waiting list.

18. As regards the local supply and demand, some districts had excessive demand for home-based services from elderly persons using the services provided by RSPs in their respective districts and those residing in the districts and waitlisted for such services. Those districts were the Central and Western District, Islands District, Wong Tai Sin District, Sha Tin District, the North District and Yuen Long District. On the

contrary, Wan Chai District, Sham Shui Po District, Kowloon City District and Yau Tsim Wong District appeared to have surplus supply of home-based services (each with over 500 places more than needed). Nevertheless, as many RSPs offer cross-district home-based services to elderly persons from various districts and RSPs cannot charge users extra cost for travelling to the districts they are allowed to serve, using cross-district services does not incur extra transportation and time costs for elderly users. We believe that the demand and supply of home-based services can maintain a balance among districts given service places of RSPs of different districts can flexibly complement one another.

19. As at the end of December 2022, 4,191 places for day care centre services (centre-based services) were provided under the Pilot Scheme. While there were 3,518 users of centre-based services and mixed mode of home-based and centre-based services, 1,771 persons were waitlisted for centre-based services on the Central Waiting List, making up a total of 5,289 elderly persons in need of centre-based services. SWD explained that a place for centre-based services could be used by more than one voucher holder in different time slots or on different days. That means the total number of service places might not be insufficient to meet the demand. In the absence of detailed information on the utilisation status of each service place, we could not comment on the actual situation of demand and supply of service places. Considering only the total number of users, there is still a surplus of service places for the time being.

20. As regards the demand and supply of centre-based services at district level, there was a deficit of service places in six districts out of the 18 districts over the territory, namely the Eastern District, the Southern District, Wong Tai Sin District, Sha Tin District, Islands District and Yuen Long District, assuming that one service place could accommodate 1.5 elderly persons. This shows that the supply of centre-based service places of those districts could not meet the demand of voucher holders using services of RSPs of those districts and elderly persons waitlisted for such services in those districts. This observation is generally in line with SWD's data on the number of voucher holders in various districts using cross-district centre-based services. On the other hand, in Sham Shui Po District, Yau Tsim Mong District, Kowloon City District and Kwai Tsing District, the supply of relevant services is relatively sufficient.

21. We understand that there are more constraints in transport arrangements and premises for day care centres. For example, RSPs must provide an indoor area of 5.25 square metres for each place of centre-based services. Hence, only a few RSPs could offer cross-district centre-based services. The centre-based service supply of traditional subsidised services is subject to similar constraints. As such, it is more difficult to balance the demand and supply of centre-based services at district level.

22. SWD regularly examines the adequacy of CCS voucher services in various districts and provides updates on local service availability in sharing sessions and briefings for RSPs. Besides, SWD encourages organisations to offer more services and extend their service modes in districts with a larger elderly population or greater service demand. In view of the insufficiency of centre-based service places in a number of

districts, coupled with the Government's initiative to regularise the Pilot Scheme and increase the quota progressively, we recommend that SWD continue to regularly provide up-to-date statistics and information about the supply and demand of CCS voucher services in each district to existing and potential RSPs. SWD should also invite more organisations to offer services or extend the modes and coverage of services in districts with keen demand so that more centre-based service places can be provided to address the needs of local or cross-district elderly users.

23. For analysing the demand and supply at district level, this Office has requested SWD to provide statistics on the number of active voucher holders residing in each district. SWD explained that such analysis should not rely on one single factor such as the difference between the number of active voucher users living in each district and the service places provided in that district. Currently, SWD takes into account a number of factors when analysing the local demand and supply of services. These factors include the size of the elderly population, the median household income, the number of inactive voucher holders (categorised by the address of voucher holders), the number of voucher holders using service provided in a district (including elderly persons living in that district and those coming from other districts), the utilisation rates of RSPs' services and changes in the rates of each district.

24. We accept SWD's view that whether the supply of services could meet the demand should not be judged by one single factor like the number of active voucher holders residing in a district but using services in other districts. We also find it reasonable for the Department to have used the aforesaid data and information to examine the local demand and supply of services. Nevertheless, we consider that the number of active voucher holders residing in each district should reflect more directly the local demand for CCS voucher services. As a matter of fact, the number of inactive voucher holders of each district (categorised by the address of voucher holders) could only reflect the local demand indirectly because most of the inactive voucher holders do not have immediate needs for such services. Moreover, the number of voucher holders using services provided in a district (including elderly persons residing in that district and those coming from other districts) has its limitation because that number of voucher holders is unlikely to exceed the service places offered by RSPs in the district, making it hard to reflect any excessive demand for service places. If SWD considers that the above two pieces of data could reflect the local demand for services, then the number of active voucher holders residing in each district (including elderly persons using local services and those using cross-district services) should be regarded as even more significant in reflecting the local demand. We recommend that SWD incorporate such data in the analysis of the demand and supply of services at district level for a more comprehensive result.

Elderly Persons without Carers Should Be Given More Assistance

25. There are views that elderly persons may not understand the complicated operation of the Pilot Scheme. Hence, they do not know how to use the vouchers received, or they would purchase or use the wrong services. They may also be lured to

purchase unnecessary services by co-payment. As a result, some suggest that SWD introduce a case management system to the Pilot Scheme and assign an independent case manager to follow up on the care needs of each voucher holder, and assist the elderly persons and their carers to identify suitable RSPs and service packages. This Office has also received similar views from members of the public.

26. According to the existing arrangement of the Pilot Scheme, the RSPs selected by the voucher holders have to follow up on their care needs and arrange suitable services for them. RSPs should formulate an individual care plan ("ICP") for a voucher holder and devise a service package based on the wish of the elderly person and sign a service package agreement with him/her under the supervision of professionals (i.e. enrolled/registered nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists or registered social workers). After starting the service, RSPs should also review the care needs of the elderly person at regular intervals (at least once every six months) so as to modify the services.

27. SWD requires that RSPs must respect the choice and will of voucher holders in the aforesaid process. SWD has also set out guidelines on how RSPs should formulate and implement ICPs for voucher holders. When conducting service monitoring visits at the premises of RSPs, SWD's staff will randomly check the ICPs of voucher holders, review their reports and service records to ascertain whether the RSPs have provided services and completed the ICPs as agreed.

28. Moreover, SWD set up a Centralised Team in the second phase of the Pilot Scheme to support voucher holders in collaboration with responsible workers[2]. SWD considered that compared with other external organisations, the Centralised Team, being familiar with the operation of the Pilot Scheme, should be able to support voucher holders and responsible workers in a more direct and focused manner. Voucher holders and carers can approach responsible workers or the Centralised Team for assistance, which includes answering their enquiries, helping them to decide whether they should apply for CCS vouchers, selecting RSPs and service packages that best suit their needs, and helping elderly persons to switch RSPs where necessary.

29. Currently, there are more than 10,000 voucher holders under the Pilot Scheme. We understand that it requires tremendous manpower and resources to provide individual case management service to such a large number of elderly persons, no matter it is SWD or other organisations that take up the work. Having weighed the pros and cons, SWD decided that the responsibility of assisting voucher holders and following up on their LTC needs should be shared by the Centralised Team, responsible workers and RSPs, instead of assigning an independent third party to offer case management service. SWD must have taken manpower and financial factors into account before making the decision. In our opinion, the crux is whether the current mode can help elderly persons to make good use of CCS vouchers to meet their LTC needs.

[2] Responsible workers refer to social workers working for the service units under the Government or non-governmental organisations, who are responsible for assisting elderly persons by following up on their registration and allocation of LTC services.

30. The Centralised Team will proactively contact voucher holders on three particular occasions: one month after the elderly person has received but yet to use the vouchers; three months have passed but the elderly person has yet to use the vouchers; and when the elderly person quits the Pilot Scheme. The team will find out why voucher holders do not use the vouchers and offer them assistance where necessary. For example, the team can help the elderly persons to select suitable RSPs and service packages.

31. Each year, the Centralised Team handles thousands of enquiries from voucher holders, carers, responsible workers and RSPs, the majority of which are enquiries about the Pilot Scheme and how to apply for CCS vouchers, with the rest concerning the selection of suitable RSPs and service packages and switching RSPs, etc. The number of enquiries decreased by 42% from 5,311 in 2017 to 3,064 in 2022.

32. Based on the above information, the work of the Centralised Team is different from what case management is generally perceived. Nevertheless, the team's work can indeed help voucher holders or carers to a certain extent to make the best out of the voucher services and assist them in resolving problems with using vouchers, including finding services that best suit their needs. In recent years, the Centralised Team has received fewer enquiries, indicating that elderly persons and stakeholders concerned have become more familiar with the operation and usage of CCS vouchers.

33. On the other hand, there have been fewer complaints against RSPs. SWD received only 18 complaints in the past five years, on average three to four complaints per year. Only nine of them were substantiated or partially substantiated. During the same period, SWD did not receive any complaints about elderly persons not knowing how to use CCS vouchers, purchasing/using wrong services, or being lured into purchasing unnecessary services. This shows that the situation mentioned in the public views may be individual cases only.

34. Nevertheless, many elderly persons in Hong Kong do not have children or carers, and they are in need of greater assistance from SWD or responsible workers when using CCS vouchers. In our opinion, as the Centralised Team has reduced workload on handling enquiries, it should have more capacity to support voucher holders without children or carers. For example, the Centralised Team could telephone them regularly in addition to the three aforesaid occasions to understand how they have been using the vouchers and offer assistance where necessary.

More Random Interviews Should be Arranged during Service Monitoring Visits

35. Each year, SWD carries out service monitoring visits at day care centres under RSPs and the home of users receiving home care services to monitor the service quality of RSPs. During the visits, SWD will examine relevant records, files and facilities, as well as conduct random interviews with users and check their service records, to ensure that RSPs have met all the requirements of SWD. The Department has also formulated internal guidelines on the procedures for conducting service

monitoring visits and a checklist to facilitate staff's discharge of duties and recording of the results. In the past five years, SWD issued only 21 notices of irregularity, on average four notices per year. SWD had handled the cases in accordance with the established procedures and confirmed that the RSPs concerned had rectified the irregularities.

36. Our staff have observed how SWD staff performed service monitoring visits at day care centres and elderly users' home. We reckon that SWD's staff acted in accordance with the Department's guidelines and requirements and carefully examined RSPs' records and provision of services. We consider that SWD's mechanism of service monitoring visits operated smoothly in general and served its purposes.

37. During the service monitoring visits, SWD will randomly interview on the spot one to three users of day care centres or home care services or their carers to gather their feedback on CCS vouchers, service providers and services. In our view, the interviews enable SWD to learn about the experience and views of voucher users as well as their genuine comments on the Pilot Scheme, service providers and services, beyond the paper records kept by RSPs. This will help SWD monitor the service quality of RSPs and even gauge public feedback on the effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme.

38. We, however, notice that SWD interviewed only one voucher holder of centre-based services in nearly all the service monitoring visits of the past two years. Regarding home-based services, two voucher holders were interviewed in about 20% to 30% of the service monitoring visits. According to SWD, random interviews with voucher holders or carers during the visits is only one of the Department's means of collecting their feedback. When processing the reimbursement of subsidies to RSPs every month, SWD's staff will also proactively contact voucher holders with heavy usage of services to understand their situation. That said, since SWD's service monitoring visits are unannounced and carried out annually, and conducting random interviews with users is an essential part of the process, improving the effectiveness of service monitoring visits should be more conducive to the enhancement of the overall service quality. Hence, we recommend that SWD instruct its staff to conduct random interviews with at least two users or their carers during service monitoring visits for both centre-based services and home-based services, so as to step up its monitoring of the service quality without requiring excessive additional manpower and resources.

39. Currently, SWD does not place any opinion survey forms at the premises of RSPs to allow elderly persons or carers to make identified or anonymous submission of views on CCS vouchers, service providers or services. We, therefore, recommend that SWD introduce this measure to facilitate its monitoring of RSPs' performance.

Reasons for Switching RSPs by Voucher Holders Should Be Examined

40. Under the Pilot Scheme, voucher holders can freely switch RSPs based on their needs without obtaining SWD's approval. This is one of the initiatives making CCS voucher services more flexible than traditional subsidised services. SWD's information showed that between the years of 2017/18 and 2022/23, about 200 to 500

voucher holders switched RSPs each year. SWD, however, has not maintained statistical information on the reasons for their change.

41. Voucher holders may switch RSPs for a number of reasons such as moving home, transportation or personal preference. It may also be due to the service quality of the original RSPs. As RSPs are required to notify SWD of any voucher holders quitting the services or any new enrolments, we find it feasible for SWD to approach the voucher holders concerned upon receiving such notifications in order to understand their reasons for switching RSPs. In case it is due to the service quality of the original RSP, SWD should duly follow up and urge the RSP concerned for improvement.

Updates on Vacancy for Service Places Should Be Regularly Provided on SWD's Elderly Information Website and Its Function Should Be Upgraded

42. At present, elderly persons and carers can use the search engine on SWD's Elderly Information Website to look for suitable RSPs by district and service delivery mode, and get the contact information, the number of service places and vacancy as well as service items of RSPs. By using an exclusive account established by SWD, RSPs are required to update the vacancy for service places on the website at least on a fortnightly basis in case of changes in the availability of services. If RSPs do not update their vacancy for service places, the website system will automatically send an email reminder to alert them to provide updates in a timely manner.

43. During our investigation, we used the search engine on SWD's Elderly Information Website to randomly check information about 10 RSPs and found that the information on the number of service places and vacancy of five of these RSPs were last updated three months to more than two years ago. As regards such long delay in updating the said information, SWD explained that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the provision of services by some RSPs, and the vacancy for service places had remained unchanged for a long period of time. Accordingly, the RSPs needed not update the relevant information on the website.

44. In our opinion, even if the vacancy for service places had indeed remained unchanged for a long time, the RSPs should still have provided relevant information via the exclusive account according to the time frame set by SWD. The Elderly Information Website would then have shown the time of the latest update, thus avoiding a misunderstanding that the information had expired. We recommend that SWD require RSPs to provide timely updates on the vacancy for service places. SWD should also step up its monitoring of RSPs' compliance with the requirement. As a further measure, SWD should modify the functions of the website so that voucher holders or carers can check the real-time vacancy for service places, saving them the trouble of calling individual RSPs for such information.

45. In this regard, SWD indicated that it is exploring how the information technology system can be improved and the feasibility of developing an electronic platform for providing service and information to applicants or voucher holders more

conveniently. Voucher holders can then process real-time checks on information about their vouchers and service records as well as the vacancy for service places of RSPs. On the other hand, RSPs can also update the vacancy for service places via the electronic platform and submit relevant documents and applications for reimbursement of subsidies to SWD so as to streamline the administrative work. The enhancement measure for the system is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2023.

Make Better Use of Newspaper or Television Interviews for Publicity

46. Since the launch of the Pilot Scheme, SWD has been using various channels to promote CCS voucher services among eligible elderly persons and members of the public and explain the details and key features of the Pilot Scheme, including holding press conferences, publishing press releases and blogs, accepting newspapers and television interviews, releasing information on SWD's website and distributing leaflets and CD-ROMs at district elderly community centres, neighbourhood elderly centres and day care centres for the elderly. SWD has also cited real cases in the newspapers and television interviews to highlight the advantages of CCS vouchers to elderly persons and their carers. Between 2013 and 2022, SWD organised 77 district-based sessions to promote CCS voucher services to responsible workers and provide updates on the Pilot Scheme.

47. That said, we notice that the major publicity means of the Pilot Scheme have been press releases, articles on the Secretary for Labour and Welfare's blog and promotional speeches of government officials when they attended events. There was only one occasion where the Pilot Scheme was publicised through newspaper and television interviews with users and carers. We consider that newspaper and television interviews can reach more audience and help elderly persons and carers better understand the advantages of CCS vouchers (for example, the flexibility that elderly persons can enjoy in arranging services and switching RSPs) through real cases. Hence, this kind of publicity should be more effective. We recommend that SWD consider arranging more newspaper or television interviews with real cases cited to promote voucher services among elderly persons and carers, so as to attract more eligible elderly persons to use such services.

Our Recommendations

48. The Ombudsman has made the following recommendations to SWD:

(1) continue with its endeavours to encourage eligible elderly persons newly added to the Central Waiting List to apply for CCS vouchers, and regularly (e.g. once every year) approach those voucher holders who have not used the vouchers received in order to identify potential areas for service improvement and re-examine elderly persons' service needs in collaboration with responsible workers and help them choose suitable RSPs or service packages;

(2) obtain from RSPs the list of elderly persons waiting for their services, approach other RSPs and the voucher holders on the list and attempt to make matching suggestions so that those elderly persons can receive necessary services as soon as possible;

(3) expedite its study and test on allowing voucher holders to purchase services from more than one RSP concurrently for early implementation so that elderly persons can enjoy services under the scheme more flexibly;

(4) continue to regularly provide up-to-date statistics and information about the supply and demand of CCS voucher services in each district to existing and potential RSPs, and invite more organisations to offer services or extend the modes and coverage of services in districts with keen demand so that more centre-based service places can be provided to local or cross-district elderly users;

(5) incorporate the number of active voucher holders residing in each district (including elderly persons using local services and those using cross-district services) in the analysis of the demand and supply of services at district level for a more comprehensive result;

(6) provide more support to voucher holders without children or carers by, for example, proactively telephoning them on occasions other than the standard contact time points, so as to understand how they have been using the vouchers and offer assistance where necessary;

(7) instruct its staff to conduct random interviews with at least two users or carers during service monitoring visits for both centre-based services and home-based services, so as to step up the monitoring of the service quality;

(8) place opinion survey forms at the premises of RSPs to allow elderly persons or carers to make identified or anonymous submission of views on CCS vouchers, service providers or services to SWD;

(9) upon receiving notification of voucher holders' leaving the original RSPs, approach the voucher holders concerned to understand their reasons for switching RSPs. In case it is due to the service quality of the original RSPs, SWD should duly follow up on the matters;

(10) require RSPs to provide timely updates on the vacancy for service places and step up the monitoring of their compliance with the requirement. As a further measure, SWD should modify the functions of the Elderly Information Website to allow voucher holders or carers

to check the real-time vacancy for service places, saving them the trouble of calling individual RSPs for such information; and

(11) consider arranging more newspaper or television interviews with real cases cited to promote voucher services among elderly persons and carers, so as to attract more eligible elderly persons to use such services.

Office of The Ombudsman
August 2023

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1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1.1 The Government's current elderly care policy is to promote "ageing in place as the core, institutional care as backup". Introduced in September 2013, the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly ("the Pilot Scheme") supports frail elderly persons to age in place under the "money-following-the-user" mode. Entering its second and third phases in October 2016 and October 2020 respectively, the Pilot Scheme has been in operation for about a decade. Based on their individual needs, holders of community care service vouchers ("CCS vouchers") can receive day care service, home care service (such as personal care, rehabilitation exercise and meal delivery) and residential respite service offered by service providers recognised by the Social Welfare Department ("SWD").

1.2 The Government has continued to review the Pilot Scheme and take enhancement measures, which include increasing the number of CCS vouchers, adopting more flexible service modes and enlisting more organisations to provide services. Meanwhile, there are public views that some elderly persons have insufficient knowledge of the Pilot Scheme while some have never used the services with the vouchers they received. Government data show that between 2013/14 and 2020/21, the total number of CCS vouchers increased from 1,200 to 8,000. Nevertheless, as at 2020/21, more than 20% of the total number of elderly persons receiving vouchers over the years had left the Pilot Scheme without ever using the services. Moreover, the scheme was still at the try-out stage despite long years of operation.

1.3 In view of the above, The Ombudsman launched this direct investigation to examine the operational arrangements for the Pilot Scheme, including its service planning, the workflow of processing applications, measures to assist elderly persons to select service providers, monitoring of service quality and utilisation rates, as well as promotion and publicity efforts for the services, and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement where necessary.

PROCESS OF INVESTIGATION

1.4 On 25 November 2021, The Ombudsman initiated this direct investigation with SWD pursuant to section 7(1)(a)(ii) of The Ombudsman Ordinance. On 2 December, we issued a press release to invite views from members of the public.

1.5 This Office received a total of 11 submissions from the public, among which were comments from members of the public or stakeholders about the lack of information and publicity about the Pilot Scheme, resulting in elderly persons, their carers and personnel taking care of elderly welfare having insufficient knowledge of the scheme, which in turn has created hurdles for elderly persons and their carers to properly use CCS vouchers and select services. Some members of the public or stakeholders consider that SWD's inspections merely focus on document examination, and there are problems about recognised service providers ("RSPs"), including inaccurate information on the vacancy for service places, inconsistent service quality, poor staff attitude and undesirable sales tactics. Some find it difficult for elderly persons living in remote areas to use the services of day care centres. Besides, there are a number of suggestions for SWD from members of the public or stakeholders about the Pilot Scheme, which include adopting case management, strengthening the support to elderly persons without family support, lowering the floor value of CCS vouchers, expanding the type of services covered by CCS vouchers, disclosing the contents of the review report on the scheme and stepping up the monitoring of service quality of RSPs.

1.6 On 6 June 2023, we issued a draft investigation report to SWD for comments and received its reply on 26 June. Upon considering and incorporating SWD's comments as appropriate, we completed this final report on 14 August 2023.

2

OVERVIEW OF THE PILOT SCHEME – APPLICATION FOR AND USE OF CCS VOUCHERS

OVERVIEW OF THE PILOT SCHEME

2.1 The Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services and the Central Waiting List for Subsidised Long Term Care Services ("Central Waiting List") implemented by SWD provide standardised assessment and registration for subsidised long term care ("LTC") services for the elderly at single entry point to facilitate the application, waitlisting and allocation of such services. When applying for LTC services, elderly persons are required to undergo the Standardised Care Need Assessment by recognised assessors (including social workers, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, etc.). When the LTC needs of the elderly persons are ascertained, they will be matched with appropriate LTC services. Community care services ("CCS") and residential care services ("RCS") are two major types of subsidised LTC services.

2.2 The Pilot Scheme aims to provide an additional option of CCS for elderly persons waitlisted for subsidised LTC services and living in the community to assist them in ageing in place.

2.3 Financed by the Lotteries Fund, the Pilot Scheme was introduced in September 2013 to provide 1,200 CCS vouchers to eligible elderly persons. SWD implemented Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme in October 2016 and October 2020 respectively, and the number of CCS vouchers has progressively increased to 8,000 in Phase 3. The "money-following-the-user" mode is adopted in the Pilot Scheme to allow eligible elderly persons to use the CCS vouchers to purchase suitable services from RSPs based on their individual needs.

CCS Voucher Values

2.4 The number of CCS vouchers and the voucher values in each phase from Phase 1 to Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme are set out as follows:

Table 1: Number of CCS vouchers and voucher values in different phases of the Pilot Scheme

Phases of the Pilot Scheme	Implementation schedule	Number of CCS vouchers	CCS voucher values (Monthly)
Phase 1	September 2013	1,200 vouchers	Single voucher value of $5,800 (price level of 2013/14)
Phase 2	October 2016	Progressively increased from 3,000 to 7,000 vouchers	Offering five voucher values: $3,600, $5,200, $6,500, $7,300 and $8,600 (price level of 2016/17)
Phase 3	October 2020	8,000 vouchers	Offering any value in-between the floor and ceiling voucher values from $4,210 to $10,070 (price level of 2022/23)

2.5 As at December 2022, the monthly floor and ceiling values of CCS vouchers were $4,210 and $10,070 respectively. Subject to their individual needs, elderly persons can purchase any service packages offered by RSPs that are priced between the floor and ceiling voucher values. Subject to the voucher values, RSPs offer services to elderly persons on a monthly basis. In case an elderly person purchases a service package that is priced below the ceiling value of CCS vouchers, the remaining voucher value will not be brought forward to the next month. CCS voucher values are adjusted annually based on the Composite Consumer Price Index.

2.6 According to SWD, the voucher values are set with reference to the cost of traditional subsidised CCS as CCS voucher holders receive similar services. At present, the estimated monthly costs of traditional subsidised day care service and home care service are $12,191 and $9,590 per person respectively (revised estimates of 2022/23). In setting the floor value of CCS vouchers, SWD has made reference to the lowest usage of traditional subsidised services to ensure that voucher holders are able to receive basic CCS. In 2021/22, each user purchased services of an average value of about $5,700 from RSPs, which reflects that the existing voucher value is sufficient for the service packages that CCS vouchers need. SWD believed that under normal circumstances, services priced below the floor value of CCS vouchers may not meet the basic needs of CCS voucher holders. SWD has not maintained information on the distribution of used CCS vouchers by voucher value.

2.7 Nevertheless, in view of the situation that some CCS voucher holders had purchased less services during the COVID-19 pandemic, SWD has since February 2020 allowed voucher holders to purchase service packages of a value below the floor value of CCS vouchers based on their needs. With the pandemic under control and the society resuming normalcy, SWD currently maintains the aforesaid measure to allow flexibility so that elderly persons can gradually resume their purchase of necessary service packages.

Co-payment Categories

2.8 CCS are purchased in the mode of co-payment by voucher holders under the "affordable users pay" principle. Elderly persons who can afford less will receive more Government subsidies. The service package values include the amount of co-payment to be made by elderly users. SWD will determine the co-payment category of elderly persons by assessing their financial condition taking into account the household income of the elderly persons and household members (i.e. parents, children, and husband and wife living together in Hong Kong) and with reference to the quarterly Median Monthly Domestic Household Income released by the Census and Statistics Department. Assets of the elderly persons and household members will be excluded. There are six categories of co-payment at the rate of 5%, 8%, 12%, 16%, 25% and 40% of the service package value. Elderly persons only need to pay on a monthly basis for the services provided by the selected RSP according to their co-payment category while the Government will pay for the remaining amount of the service package value. The distribution of co-payment categories of CCS voucher holders in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme is set out as follows:

Table 2: Distribution of co-payment categories of CCS voucher holders in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme (As at the end of December 2022)

Co-payment category	Rate of co-payment	Accumulated number of persons (percentage over total no. of CCS voucher holders)
I	5%	2,401 (14.7%)
II	8%	8,196 (50.3%)
III	12%	1,428 (8.8%)
IV	16%	1,644 (10.1%)
V	25%	308 (1.9%)
VI	40%	2,304 (14.2%)
Total		**16,281 (100%)**

(Note: The accumulated number of persons includes CCS voucher holders who had used the vouchers, left the scheme or never used the vouchers.)

PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING AND APPROVING APPLICATIONS FOR CCS VOUCHERS

2.9 Elderly persons eligible for CCS vouchers must have been assessed and recommended for CCS or RCS under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services and are waitlisted for subsidised CCS and/or RCS on the Central Waiting List without having received any kind of such services.

2.10 In the past, the Community Care Service Voucher Office ("CCS Voucher Office") under SWD invited applications for CCS vouchers by sending letters to eligible elderly persons by batches according to the dates of their applications for LTC services. Since Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme commenced in October 2020, all eligible elderly persons could apply for CCS vouchers without having to wait for their turn because the Government had allocated more resources to the scheme. The Pilot Scheme was then extended to include all eligible elderly persons on the Central Waiting List. As at the end of December 2022, SWD had sent invitation letters to nearly 36,000 eligible elderly persons in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme. The Department received a total of 10,253 applications from eligible elderly persons in this phase.

2.11 SWD's invitation letter includes a brief introduction to the Pilot Scheme, the scope of services, the publicity leaflet, co-payment categories and an application form to provide elderly persons and their carers with details of the scheme. Besides, the responsible workers[1] assisting the elderly persons concerned will also receive a copy of the invitation letter so that they can assist the latter when necessary.

2.12 On receiving an application, CCS Voucher Office will acknowledge receipt of the application within five working days. Generally speaking, it takes two to four weeks for the CCS Voucher Office to complete the vetting of application and inform the applicant of the result. The office will randomly select applications for conducting family income assessment to determine the co-payment categories of applicants. Elderly persons subject to random assessment will receive a letter from the office requiring submission of supporting documents regarding the information provided in their application forms. The responsible workers concerned will also receive a copy of the letter so that they can assist the elderly persons in submitting the documents. Within 10 days of receipt of all the documents required, the office will notify applicants of the vetting result and issue the voucher certificates, which will be sent to the elderly persons together with the Guidance Notes for CCS voucher holders and a list of RSPs serving their district and relevant information to help the elderly persons and their carers select RSPs and service packages.

2.13 For elderly persons having received voucher certificates, SWD will change the status of their applications for LTC services on the Central Waiting List to "inactive". Where necessary, the elderly persons may make a request to the responsible workers to

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[1] Responsible workers refer to the social workers working for the service units under the Government or non-governmental organisations, who are responsible for assisting elderly persons by following up on their registration and allocation of LTC services.

reactivate their application on the Central Waiting List by changing the status from "inactive" to "active". The waiting time will be calculated according to the original date of application.

2.14 The Centralised Team of the CCS Voucher Office (see **paras. 5.4 to 5.6** for the establishment and responsibilities of the Centralised Team) will proactively contact voucher holders or their carers one month after the issuance of CCS vouchers to check whether they have any difficulty in using the vouchers.

2.15 SWD pointed out that after receiving an application, the Department will only vet the financial situation of the applicant and household members to determine the co-payment category. Hence, no applications were rejected in the past.

2.16 In case a voucher holder has yet to use the CCS voucher three months after its issuance to purchase CCS from any RSPs, the relevant voucher certificate will be voided.

2.17 According to SWD, some CCS voucher services had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the past two years. Some voucher holders or carers stopped using CCS voucher services due to worries about facing a higher risk of infection. When the pandemic was severe (e.g. in February and March 2022), some RSPs (including over 70 day care centres) had to suspend their services because of the increasing number of confirmed cases involving staff and service users. In this light, SWD made flexible arrangements to allow voucher holders to keep unused vouchers for later use when the pandemic has relieved. Though the pandemic is already under control and the society has progressively resumed normalcy, SWD continues with this arrangement.

Household Means Test

2.18 SWD stated that when the Pilot Scheme was first introduced, it randomly selected one of every ten applications received (i.e. 10% of the total number of applications) for conducting a household means test to determine the co-payment categories. Starting from 2017, SWD has increased the proportion of random checks to one of every eight applications, accounting for 12.5% of the total number of applications received.

2.19 When conducting household means tests, SWD found discrepancies between the number of elderly persons and household members provided in the application form and the actual number of persons in many applications. Hence, the monthly household income declared was more than the actual amount or otherwise. Between 2020/21 and 2022/23, SWD had found that among the applications randomly selected, 31% to 38% had declared a household income which was less than the actual amount or inaccurate. Details are set out as follows:

Table 3: Results of household means tests conducted by SWD for the Pilot Scheme in recent years

Year	Vetted applications in which the household income declared was less than the actual amount or inaccurate (percentage over total no. of applications)			
	No. of cases requiring a co-payment category of a lower rate	No. of cases where the co-payment category remained unchanged	No. of cases requiring a co-payment category of a higher rate	Total no. of cases
2020/21	36 (28%)	82 (64%)	10 (8%)	128 (100%)
2021/22	53 (27%)	130 (66%)	15 (7%)	198 (100%)
2022/23 (as at the end of December 2022)	25 (23%)	81 (73%)	5 (4%)	111 (100%)

2.20 Based on **paragraph 2.19 and Table 3**, among the applications where the household income declared was found to be less than the actual amount or inaccurate, cases requiring a co-payment category of a higher rate did not account for a large proportion. Those cases accounted for only 1.5% to 2.5% of the total number of applications vetted, and most of which required a co-payment category of a lower rate or should maintain the same category of co-payment.

2.21 In the household means tests of the previous three years, among the cases where the household income declared was less than the actual amount, the highest monthly household income involved was $48,221.80. In that case, as the applicant's declared household income already fell into the co-payment category of the highest rate (i.e. Category VI), the co-payment category remained at the highest rate.

SELECTION OF RSP AND SERVICE PACKAGE

2.22 Under the Pilot Scheme, CCS voucher holders can select among three service delivery modes:

(1) day care centre service (centre-based mode);
(2) home care service (home-based mode); and
(3) centre-based and home-based service (mixed mode).

The scope of CCS voucher services includes rehabilitation exercise, nursing care and personal care. Starting from Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme, some RSPs also provide residential respite service. Meanwhile, speech therapy and soft meal services were

introduced in 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively.

2.23 Under the Pilot Scheme, there are currently about 250 RSPs operated by non-governmental organisations ("NGOs") receiving government subventions, non-profit-making organisations or social enterprises and private organisations having experience in providing care services for the elderly. The mode and scope of services of RSPs vary from one to another. Voucher holders may contact the RSP direct to enquire about the details or browse SWD's website or its Elderly Information Website[2] for information on the eligibility, application method, scope and mode of services of the Pilot Scheme, RSPs and their services, etc. The Elderly Information Website's search engine allows elderly persons and their carers to look for suitable RSPs by district and service delivery mode, and get their contact information, the number of service places and vacancy as well as service items.

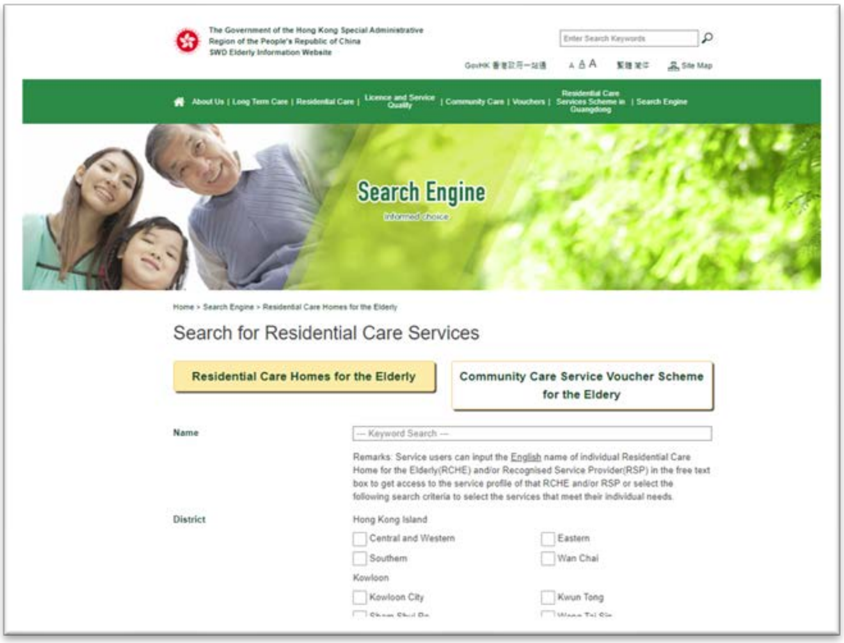
Figure 1: Homepage of SWD Elderly Information Website



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2 SWD Elderly Information Website (www.elderlyinfo.swd.gov.hk) provides a one-stop platform for delivering information on elderly services to elderly persons and their carers and for public's reference.

Figure 2: Search Engine of SWD Elderly Information Website



2.24 Elderly persons or applicants (carers may submit applications on behalf of elderly persons) may indicate in the application form whether they are willing to receive messages from RSPs for information updates. If the elderly persons consent to receiving such messages, SWD will give their contact information to the RSPs serving their district for introduction of services.

2.25 Moreover, elderly persons and their carers may approach the responsible worker or the duty social worker of the CCS Voucher Office for support and assistance, including answering enquiries about the details of the Pilot Scheme and the operation of CCS vouchers, providing information on RSPs, assisting them to choose suitable RSPs and service packages and helping voucher holders to switch RSPs when necessary.

Individual Care Plans for Elderly Persons

2.26 SWD requires that RSPs participating in the Pilot Scheme must respect the choice and will of voucher holders. Upon admitting a voucher holder, RSPs should formulate an individual care plan ("ICP") and devise a service package based on the wish of the voucher holder and sign a service package agreement with him or her within a month. After starting the service, RSPs should also review the care needs of the elderly person at regular intervals (at least once every six month) so as to modify the services. The formulation, implementation and review of each voucher holder's ICP must be coordinated, monitored and recorded by RSPs' professionals (i.e. enrolled or registered nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists or registered social workers) so that relevant records would be readily available for inspection. SWD has also established guidelines for RSPs on the formulation and implementation of ICPs for voucher holders.

SWITCHING RSPs

2.27 Voucher holders can freely switch RSPs based on their needs without obtaining SWD's approval, while RSPs only need to complete the relevant form for submission to the CCS Voucher Office for record. Voucher holders and their carers may send their feedback on the services provided by RSPs to the office at any time. The numbers of voucher users who had switched RSPs from 2017/18 to 2022/23 are listed in **Table 4** below. SWD has not maintained statistical information on the reasons for their change.

Table 4: Number of voucher users who had switched RSPs from 2017/18 to 2022/23

Year	Voucher users who had switched RSPs		
	No. of users who had left the Pilot Scheme	**No. of users who were still using CCS vouchers**	**Total**
2017/18	37	199	236
2018/19	71	234	305
2019/20	79	296	375
2020/21	42	319	361
2021/22	63	284	347
2022/23 (as at the end of December 2022)	68	429	497

DISCONTINUED USE OF CCS VOUCHER SERVICES

2.28 Under the Pilot Scheme, voucher holders who have discontinued using the respective RSP's services for a consecutive month or more would be regarded as having stopped using the RSP's services. The service unit concerned should inform the CCS Voucher Office and the responsible worker within three days after the aforesaid situation has occurred or the voucher holder has decided to leave the RSP.

2.29 If the elderly person later needs to resume the use of CCS voucher service, he or she may use the services of the original RSP or choose the services provided by other RSPs. Voucher holders will not be disqualified from using CCS voucher services for the reason of hospitalisation or absence from Hong Kong.

2.30 In view of the impact of the pandemic on CCS voucher service (see **para. 2.17**), SWD made flexible arrangements to allow voucher holders who have discontinued using services for a consecutive month or more to keep the unused vouchers for later use when the pandemic situation has relieved. Although the pandemic is already under control and the society has progressively resumed normalcy, SWD continues with the arrangements for the time being.

LEAVING THE PILOT SCHEME

2.31 In case the care plan for a voucher holder is changed due to his or her physical condition or other circumstances such that CCS voucher service is no longer needed, the voucher holder or his or her carer should inform the CCS Voucher Office of the decision to leave the Pilot Scheme via the responsible worker or the respective RSP. The latter will complete a specified form stating the voucher holder's reason for leaving the scheme[3] for submission to the CCS Voucher Office. After giving notification to the CCS Voucher Office, voucher holders should destroy the voucher certificate. The responsible worker will continue to follow up on their welfare and LTC needs.

2.32 Based on the information on the specified form mentioned above, the accumulated number of voucher holders having left Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme as at December 2022 and their reasons for doing so are listed in the table below.

Table 5: Accumulated number of voucher holders having left Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme and their reasons for doing so (As at the end of December 2022)

Reasons for leaving the Pilot Scheme	Accumulated number of voucher holders		
	No. of holders who had used CCS vouchers	No. of holders who had not used CCS vouchers	Total no. of holders by reason (percentage over total no. of holders)
Natural turnover			
Will be or have been allocated or have received subsidised CCS	566	1,048	1,614 (25.9%)
Will be or have been allocated or have received subsidised RCS	830	220	1,050 (16.8%)
Will be or have been allocated or have received private RCS	358	155	513 (8.2%)
Deceased	1,600	677	2,277 (36.5%)
Taken care of by family members or domestic helpers	159	505	664 (10.6%)

[3] Each month, SWD will seek information from the Long Term Care Services Delivery System Office and the Immigration Department so as to identify voucher holders who have received subsidised residential RCS or CCS and those who have passed away. In case of the two aforesaid situations, SWD will close the file without the need to require the respective RSP or responsible worker to submit the specified form regarding the elderly persons' leaving the Pilot Scheme.

Reasons for leaving the Pilot Scheme	Accumulated number of voucher holders		
	No. of holders who had used CCS vouchers	**No. of holders who had not used CCS vouchers**	**Total no. of holders by reason (percentage over total no. of holders)**
Others (e.g. hospitalised or absent from Hong Kong)	51	66	117 (1.9%)
Service-related			
Unavailability of suitable service providers or service packages	0	0	0
Total	**3,564 (57.2%)**	**2,671 (42.8%)**	**6,235 (100%)**

2.33 **Table 5** shows that nearly 90% of the voucher holders who left Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme were those who would be or had been allocated traditional subsidised CCS or subsidised or private RCS and those discontinued using the vouchers because of death.

2.34 For elderly persons switching to traditional subsidised CCS, SWD has not maintained information or data for analysing their reasons for the change. As regards those voucher holders leaving the Pilot Scheme because they were taken care of by family members or domestic helpers, SWD has not maintained relevant information because elderly persons when applying for CCS vouchers are only required to provide their personal and household financial information, not the caring arrangement for them.

2.35 For voucher holders allegedly leaving the Pilot Scheme because of unavailability of suitable service providers or service packages, the Centralised Team will proactively contact the voucher holders, their carers or responsible workers to provide necessary assistance.

2.36 According to SWD, the Pilot Scheme has been implemented for almost a decade, and elderly persons have used CCS voucher services on different occasions or have left the scheme for various reasons. SWD has not maintained statistical data on how many months of services voucher users purchased on average, the distribution of voucher users, the longest and shortest period of usage, etc.

UTILISATION RATE OF CCS VOUCHERS

2.37 SWD's information reveals that each year the accumulated number of voucher holders who are using or have used voucher services accounted for 60% to 70% of the accumulated number of elderly persons granted CCS vouchers throughout the years. The statistical data on the usage of CCS vouchers since the implementation of

the scheme are set out below:

Table 6: Statistics on the usage of CCS vouchers in different phases of the Pilot Scheme

Year (CCS voucher quota of that year) (a)	Accumulated no. of elderly persons granted CCS vouchers Note (b) = (e)+(g)+(h)	No. of voucher holders (percentage over total no. of voucher holders of that year)			Percentage of the no. of active voucher holders (c) over the voucher quota (a) (f) = (c)/(a) x100%	Accumulated no. of elderly persons having left Pilot Scheme Note		Cumulative total of active voucher holders Note (c)+(g) (percentage over no. of elderly persons granted CCS vouchers (b) (i)=[(c)+(g)]/ (b)x100%)
		No. of active voucher users (c)	No. of voucher holders who had not used the services (d)	Total no. of voucher holders (e) = (c)+(d)		No. of voucher holders having used the services (g)	No. of voucher holders who had not used the services (h)	
Phase 1 of Pilot Scheme								
2013/14 (1,200) (Starting from September 2013)	1,251	539 (47%)	604 (53%)	1,143 (100%)	45%	34	74	573 (46%)
2014/15 (1,200)	2,092	972 (81%)	232 (19%)	1,204 (100%)	81%	351	537	1,323 (63%)
2015/16 (1,200)	2,919	1,177 (86%)	187 (14%)	1,364 (100%)	98%	784	771	1,961 (67%)
2016/17 (1,200)	2,968	1,061 (99%)	14 (1%)	1,075 (100%)	88%	1,071	822	2,132 (72%)
2017/18 (1,200) (As at the end of August 2017)	2,968	1,053 (99.9%)	1 (0.1%)	1,054 (100%)	88%	1,080	834	2,133 (72%)
Phase 2 of Pilot Scheme								
2016/17 (3,000) (Starting from October 2016)	3,373	1,871 (61%)	1,185 (39%)	3,056 (100%)	62%	109	208	1,980 (59%)
2017/18 (5,000)	6,520	3,031 (69%)	1,357 (31%)	4,388 (100%)	61%	831	1,301	3,862 (59%)
2018/19 (6,000)	8,813	3,608 (70%)	1,535 (30%)	5,143 (100%)	60%	1,745	1,925	5,353 (61%)
2019/20 (7,000)	11,222	4,237 (70%)	1,787 (30%)	6,024 (100%)	61%	2,722	2,476	6,959 (62%)
2020/21 (7,000) (As at the end of September 2020)	12,154	4,379 (71%)	1,780 (29%)	6,159 (100%)	63%	3,289	2,706	7,668 (63%)

Year (CCS voucher quota of that year) (a)	Accumulated no. of elderly persons granted CCS vouchers Note (b) = (e)+(g)+(h)	No. of voucher holders (percentage over total no. of voucher holders of that year)			Percentage of the no. of active voucher holders (c) over the voucher quota (a) (f) = (c)/(a) x100%	Accumulated no. of elderly persons having left Pilot Scheme Note		Cumulative total of active voucher holders Note (c)+(g) (percentage over no. of elderly persons granted CCS vouchers (b) (i)=[(c)+(g)]/ (b)x100%)
		No. of active voucher users (c)	No. of voucher holders who had not used the services (d)	Total no. of voucher holders (e) = (c)+(d)		No. of voucher holders having used the services (g)	No. of voucher holders who had not used the services (h)	
Phase 3 of Pilot Scheme								
2020/21 (8,000) (Starting from October 2020)	8,283	4,711 (66%)	2,464 (34%)	7,175 (100%)	59%	723	385	5,434 (66%)
2021/22 (8,000)	12,998	6,276 (71%)	2,579 (29%)	8,855 (100%)	78%	2,272	1,871	8,548 (66%)
2022/23 (8,000) (As at the end of December 2022)	16,281	6,851 (68%)	3,195 (32%)	10,046 (100%)	86%	3,564	2,671	10,415 (64%)

(Note: "Accumulated number of elderly persons granted CCS vouchers", "accumulated number of elderly persons having left Pilot Scheme" and "cumulative total of active voucher holders" are calculated separately in each phase.)

2.38 SWD pointed out that the number of CCS vouchers, voucher values, implementation schedule and progress, service modes and target beneficiaries vary in different phases of the Pilot Scheme. Hence, making direct comparisons of utilisation rate of CCS vouchers between different phases might not be appropriate.

2.39 SWD added that in order to optimise the use of CCS vouchers and enhance their utilisation rate, it will from time to time examine cases where the voucher holder has yet to use the services. Since Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme, each year the Centralised Team conducts a telephone survey among voucher holders who have not used voucher services for three consecutive months, their carers or the responsible workers to find out why elderly persons have not yet used the services and review their service needs.

2.40 In the first survey conducted in 2021, about 75% of the respondents said they had not used voucher services because they had no immediate needs for such services and the remaining 25% said they were finding a suitable RSP or service package, awaiting the availability of services provided by the RSP they desired, or the services they needed were meanwhile unavailable, etc. For better utilisation of CCS voucher services, SWD has re-examined the service needs of such voucher holders through their responsible workers and carers, providing information on RSPs and assistance in selecting suitable RSPs and service packages. 148 voucher holders have since started using voucher services while 905 chose to leave the Pilot Scheme.

2.41 As regards the survey in 2022, about 90% of the respondents said they had not used voucher services because they did not have immediate needs, and the remaining 10% said they could find no RSP that offered the services they needed.

2.42 According to SWD's information, the distribution of CCS voucher holders who had not used voucher services by co-payment category in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme is set out as follows:

Table 7: The distribution of CCS voucher holders who had not used voucher services by co-payment category in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme (As at the end of December 2022)

Co-payment category	Rate of co-payment	No. of voucher holders who had not used voucher services (percentage over total no. of voucher holders)
I	5%	466 (15%)
II	8%	1,534 (48%)
III	12%	234 (7%)
IV	16%	319 (10%)
V	25%	63 (2%)
VI	40%	579 (18%)
Total		**3,195 (100%)**

(Note: The number of voucher holders who had not used voucher services includes voucher holders having stopped using voucher services but remaining in the Pilot Scheme.)

2.43 The distribution of all voucher holders by co-payment category (see **Table 2**) and that of the voucher holders who had not used voucher services by co-payment category (see **Table 7**) are similar. Both tables show that Category II accounted for the largest proportion, which was about 50% of the total number of voucher holders and followed by Category VI (accounting for about 14% to 18% of the total) and Category I (accounting for about 15% of the total).

2.44 SWD explained that RSPs apply for reimbursement of subsidies on an accountable basis under the Pilot Scheme. Hence, voucher holders who have been granted but yet to use CCS vouchers would not occupy government or RSPs' resources, or obstruct the turnover of vouchers or SWD's issuance of vouchers to elderly persons in need.

3

MONITORING OF RSPs

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR RSPs

3.1 Organisations wishing to apply for participation in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme as RSPs should have continuous experience in directly providing elderly services, either CCS or RCS, for not less than six months prior to the application date, or should be licensed private hospitals. The CCS they provide should cover at least two of the following three types of core care services:

(1) rehabilitation exercise provided by physiotherapist or occupational therapist;

(2) special or basic nursing care provided by registered or enrolled nurse; and

(3) personal care (including food feeding, transfer, showering or bathing, toileting or diaper changing, changing of clothes, meal delivery, home making, escort, etc.) provided by health worker or personal care worker.

3.2 SWD has drawn up a list of recognised service items under the Pilot Scheme. Organisations applying to become RSPs must specify the recognised service items that they can provide for SWD's approval.

3.3 Meanwhile, SWD has set up a Vetting Committee to review the applications from organisations and make recommendations for approval by the Director of Social Welfare. The Vetting Committee comprises the Assistant Director (Elderly) and other SWD officers. The vetting process includes assessing whether an applicant organisation fully meets the eligibility criteria and service requirements under the Service Specifications[4] of the Pilot Scheme, as well as reviewing relevant documents and records. Each organisation joining the Pilot Scheme must sign and comply with the terms and conditions of the Service Agreement, including the Service Specifications and the service pledges made in the application regarding performance management

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[4] SWD issued the Service Specifications to eligible organisations, introducing the objectives of the Pilot Scheme, eligibility criteria for RSPs, service targets and scope, quota and values of CCS vouchers, basic service requirements, operational procedures, financial management and performance management, with the aim of inviting eligible organisations to apply for participation in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme as RSPs.

mechanisms, contingency plans, premises and staffing arrangements, etc. Applications are not vetted under a scoring system, and organisations fully meeting the eligibility criteria can become RSPs.

Signing of Service Agreement

3.4 Before joining the Pilot Scheme, each RSP must sign a Service Agreement with SWD, which stipulates SWD's requirements for each service item. RSPs should implement the Pilot Scheme in accordance with the Service Agreement.

3.5 SWD also requires all RSPs to adhere to the Service Quality Standards consisting of four principles and 16 standards [5] in developing, specifying and implementing the quality levels for management and service delivery. Moreover, RSPs should formulate ICPs for voucher holders to identify their needs and devise suitable service packages for them.

Price Setting

3.6 RSPs should price each CCS item below the ceiling price set by SWD for SWD's approval. Prices for CCS items are adjusted annually and mainly based on the Composite Consumer Price Index.

Disclosure and Updating of Service Information

3.7 RSPs must submit to SWD the required information, including the number of service places, service districts, service items, prices, service targets (such as elderly persons with dementia), etc., for updating the information on SWD's website and its Elderly Information Website to ensure accuracy.

3.8 By using an exclusive account established by SWD, RSPs are also required to update the vacancy for service places on the Elderly Information Website at least on a fortnightly basis in case of any changes. If RSPs do not update the vacancy for service places, the website system will send an email reminder automatically alerting them to do so in a timely manner.

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[5] SWD has developed 16 Service Quality Standards based on four principles on data provision, service management, service to users, and respect for the rights of service users. These standards specify the quality levels expected of RSPs, including requirements for RSPs to ensure the availability of explanatory materials with a clear description of their purposes, objectives and service delivery modes for public access; maintain accurate and latest records of service operations and activities; and comply with all relevant legal obligations, among others.

MONITORING OF SERVICE QUALITY

Service Monitoring Visits and Random Checks

3.9 Under the Pilot Scheme, RSPs deliver services in three modes, namely centre-based, home-based, and a mixed mode of home-based and centre-based services (see **para. 2.22**). To monitor their service quality, SWD carries out service monitoring visits at day care centres, the offices of RSPs and the homes of service users regularly according to the service delivery modes of RSPs. During the visits, SWD will interview voucher holders and their carers, as well as examine all relevant records and files, including random selection of one to three voucher holders to check their ICPs and review reports, service package agreements signed with RSPs, payments, receipts, records of service usage and service hours, etc., to monitor whether RSPs have completed the ICPs and provided services in accordance with the agreement. SWD will also examine RSPs' staff recruitment, complaint investigation, questionnaire surveys, accident records, insurance certificates, and compliance with the 16 Service Quality Standards. RSPs are required to establish mechanisms for handling complaints about their staff or services, and keep records of complaints for inspection by SWD upon request.

3.10 Moreover, RSPs are required to use the forms designated by SWD for monthly submission, by the 10th day of the subsequent month, of each voucher holder's statistics, receipts and records of service usage, as well as other data related to service performance. In respect of users of CCS vouchers at or near the ceiling value, SWD will assess whether the monthly service items align with their long-term care needs and keep relevant records.

3.11 Each RSP is subject to at least one service monitoring visit annually. Visits to day care centres are unannounced. As for home visits, SWD staff will contact home-based service users in advance and arrange a home visit on the day of service delivery with their consent. However, the RSPs concerned will not be given prior notice to ensure surprise assessment and monitoring of their performance.

3.12 Where necessary, for example, in respect of RSPs newly joining the Pilot Scheme or with previous records of irregularity, SWD will conduct more than one visit per year to review their performance and implementation of improvement measures.

Collecting Feedback of Users and Carers

3.13 During the service monitoring visits, SWD will randomly interview on the spot one to three users of day care centres or home care services or their carers to gather feedback on CCS vouchers, service providers and services. Furthermore, SWD will collect feedback by telephone interview. Between 2017 and 2022, the number of voucher users of centre-based and home-based services randomly interviewed by SWD during the service monitoring visits, and statistics on the number of interviewees are tabulated below.

Table 8: Number of voucher users of centre-based services randomly interviewed by SWD and statistics on the number of interviewees

Year	No. of voucher users randomly interviewed during service monitoring visits	No. of visits with 1, 2 or 3 voucher users interviewed		
		1	2	3
2017/18	209	No records kept by SWD		
2018/19	100			
2019/20	162			
2020/21	35	22	5	1
2021/22	124	118	3	0
2022/23 (As at end of Dec 2022)	127	115	6	0

Table 9: Number of voucher users of home-based services randomly interviewed by SWD and statistics on the number of interviewees

Year	No. of voucher users randomly interviewed during service monitoring visits		No. of visits with 1, 2 or 3 voucher users interviewed face-to-face		
	Face-to-face	By telephone	1	2	3
2017/18	104	N/A	No records kept by SWD		
2018/19	71				
2019/20	105				
2020/21	14	167	4	5	0
2021/22	132	69	76	28	0
2022/23 (As at end of Dec 2022)	155	59	85	35	0

(Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some random interviews were conducted by telephone from 2020/21.)

3.14 During the service monitoring visits between 2017 and the end of December 2022, SWD received feedback from a total of 1,633 users in Phase 2 and 3 and their carers, covering service quality, service effectiveness, attitude and performance of service personnel, and communication with RSPs. Issues or requests raised by the interviewees included insufficient rehabilitation equipment and facilities in day care centres, urging more professional staff to provide services, insufficient places for home-based services, and subpar quality of meals.

3.15 In response to the feedback received during the service monitoring visits, SWD will promptly obtain further details from the RSPs and review whether they have complied with the Service Agreement, including the Service Specifications and the service pledges made in the application (see **para. 3.3**).

3.16 Where the feedback received from service users or carers did not involve any irregularity, such as their comments on the meals provided in day care centres, the transportation routes between the centres and their homes, and the alignment of service modes with their care needs, SWD has relayed the feedback to the relevant RSPs and advised them to adjust services to better suit the needs of the elderly. SWD has also promoted better service quality through the annual sharing sessions on Service Quality Standards and the briefing sessions for RSPs of the Pilot Scheme.

3.17 In addition to the service monitoring visits, CCS Voucher Office has put in place a duty service during office hours for voucher holders, carers, RSPs and responsible workers to give feedback on the Pilot Scheme. SWD also visits RSPs and conducts stakeholder surveys from time to time to collect their opinions.

Handling Irregularities

3.18 Upon discovering any irregularity during the service monitoring visits, SWD will issue a notice of irregularity requiring the RSP concerned to submit an improvement plan within seven working days explaining the reasons for the irregularity and setting out improvement measures with an implementation schedule.

3.19 Within two months of identifying the irregularity, SWD staff will conduct a review by way of visiting the RSP or homes of service users, auditing documents, collecting feedback from voucher users and carers, etc., to monitor whether the improvement plan has been implemented properly and effectively. In addition, within the same financial year of identifying the irregularity, SWD will conduct a second review visit to the RSP or homes of service users to monitor the service levels (see **para. 3.12**). Prior to the visit, SWD will make an appointment with the RSP's responsible persons so that the latter can personally report on and explain the issues concerned during the visit, thereby ensuring that the RSP has made rectifications according to the improvement plan and complied with the relevant requirements. Depending on the situation, SWD's responsible social workers may conduct review visits together with their supervisors.

3.20 The types and number of notices of irregularity issued by SWD to RSPs between 2017 and 2022 are given in **Table 10**. Information shows that the number of notices of irregularity issued by SWD over the past five years was not high. In all these cases, SWD staff conducted a review within two months after identification of the irregularity and a second review visit within the same financial year to ensure that the RSPs had rectified the irregularity according to the improvement plans and complied with the relevant requirements.

Table 10: Types and number of notices of irregularity issued by SWD to RSPs between 2017 and 2022

Type of irregularity	No. of notices of irregularity in different years				
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Service usage or prices not conforming to service package agreements signed	4	0	1	2	0
Failing to devise ICPs for voucher users or review ICPs periodically	2	0	2	0	0
Indoor area less than 5.25 square metres for each centre-based service place	6	1	0	0	0
Allocating subsidised residential care places for voucher users of residential respite service	1	1	0	0	0
Staffing issues	0	0	0	1	0
Total	**13**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**0**

Monitoring Government Subsidies Received by Organisations

3.21 After providing services, RSPs can apply for reimbursement of government subsidies on a monthly basis. Claims should be made to SWD with the reimbursement claim form, copies of receipts issued to voucher holders monthly, and service package agreements signed between RSPs and voucher holders. SWD staff will examine the documents. Where abnormal service items or volume are identified (for example, where an elderly user used CCS voucher at the ceiling value to purchase substantially a service item in a particular month, or signed up for home-based rehabilitation exercise for three consecutive hours, which is physically demanding for a normal elderly person), SWD will request RSPs to provide supplementary information (such as the service package agreements signed with voucher holders and records of service hours) and explain how the service packages so designed meet their needs. SWD will also approach the users directly to verify whether RSPs have provided the service items purchased and adequate volume according to the service package agreements before reimbursement of government subsidies.

3.22 Moreover, according to the guidelines and rules set out in the Lotteries Fund Manual, RSPs are required to submit to SWD audited annual income and expenditure statements regarding the CCS voucher values subsidised by the Government within four months after the end of each financial year when the Pilot Scheme is in operation and after its completion, so as to ensure that the funding is used within the approved scope.

Auditors should certify that the income and expenditure of RSPs under the Lotteries Fund projects have been examined in accordance with the Lotteries Fund Manual and other instructions issued by SWD. SWD will examine a random sample of annual income and expenditure statements of RSPs to identify any abnormal situation.

3.23 SWD said that under the Pilot Scheme, RSPs apply for reimbursement of government subsidies monthly on an accountable basis, which is different from the traditional subvention mode (i.e. a fixed grant disbursed to the service unit directly by the Government). Hence, the Pilot Scheme and traditional CCS have different administrative criteria and requirements[6], and a direct comparison is not appropriate. Organisations operating service providers under both financing modes need to submit information according to the requirements of the relevant Service Agreements for SWD to examine their compliance.

Suspension or Termination of Status

3.24 SWD may suspend or terminate an RSP's status if it fails to deliver basic services (in terms of the scope, level and volume of services) within the scope of the Pilot Scheme, or to comply with the Service Quality Standards or audit requirements. Since the launch of the Pilot Scheme, no RSPs have had their status suspended or terminated by SWD.

COMPLAINT HANDLING

3.25 Generally, after receiving complaints from service users regarding the services of RSPs, the CCS Voucher Office will acknowledge receipt in writing promptly and not later than 10 calendar days, and issue a substantive reply within 30 calendar days of receiving the complaints. For cases that require more than 30 days to process, the CCS Voucher Office will inform the complainant of the case progress, reasons for taking a longer time to prepare a substantive reply, and the estimated time required.

3.26 Upon receiving a complaint, the CCS Voucher Office will conduct preliminary screening. For complaints with *prima facie* evidence, the Office will investigate by way of site inspections, record reviews, meetings with RSPs and voucher users, etc. If a complaint is substantiated, the CCS Voucher Office will issue advisory or warning letters instructing the RSP concerned to take improvement or remedial measures. The RSP concerned must review the incident, formulate improvement measures, and submit a progress report to the CCS Voucher Office within around one month. The Office will further discuss the progress report and recommendations

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[6] Under the Lump Sum Grant subvention system, SWD disburses the annual Lump Sum Grant to subvented organisations in monthly instalments. Organisations are required to submit to SWD data relating to the performance standards (including service volume and service effectiveness) on a quarterly basis and conduct comprehensive assessments annually, and properly keep books of accounts, records and supporting documents. Organisations are also required to submit audited annual income and expenditure statements for SWD's examination.

therein with the RSP's management to understand the actual status of implementation and monitor its service performance continuously.

3.27 If the RSP still fails to deliver the agreed scope, level, volume and quality of services and to make rectifications, the CCS Voucher Office will take further action, including issuing advisory or warning letters again, and even suspending or terminating the RSP's status.

3.28 RSPs dissatisfied with the findings of the CCS Voucher Office may lodge an appeal in writing with the Office within one month upon receiving the Office's reply, accompanied by new information regarding the case. Appeals are processed by the CCS Voucher Office according to the established mechanism.

3.29 The number of complaints received in recent years by the CCS Voucher Office from service users related to the services of RSPs is tabulated below.

Table 11: Complaints related to services of RSPs

Year	**No. of complaints received by SWD**	**Outcome of complaint handling**			
		Complaint substantiated	**Complaint partially substantiated**	**Complaint unsubstantiated**	**Others (e.g. withdrawn by complainant)**
2018/19	5	0	2	3	0
2019/20	2	0	0	2	0
2020/21	2	1	0	1	0
2021/22	4	2	1	1	0
2022/23 (As at end of Dec 2022)	5	0	3	2	0
Total	**18**	**3**	**6**	**9**	**0**

(Note: No RSPs appealed against SWD's findings in the years above.)

3.30 As shown in **Table 11**, the CCS Voucher Office had received a total of 18 complaints over the past five years, averaging three to four complaints per year. The number of complaints was not high, and half of the cases were substantiated or partially substantiated. According to SWD's data, the complaints substantiated or partially substantiated involved such issues as lack of transparency in the availability of places, assessment criteria and waiting list of bathing service in a day care centre; RSP failing to give timely suggestion on feasible arrangements to retain a service place for an elderly person; poor attitudes of social workers, care workers and telephone operators; staff members failing to handle an elderly person's reactions properly; actual delivery time of home-based services not conforming to the service agreement; failure to make timely changes to service arrangements as requested; unauthorised photography and intrusion into the privacy of an elderly person with dementia without consent of family members; failure to notify a complainant of the detachment of parts from the wheelchair of an elderly person; failure to respond to email enquiries from a complainant; unauthorised access to contact details in the mobile phone of an elderly person and sending group

photos to family members without consent of the elderly person and family members; responding to complaints only through mobile application; and refund arrangements.

3.31 According to SWD's data, since 2018/19, SWD has not received any complaints about elderly persons not knowing how to use the CCS vouchers received, having purchased or used wrong services, or having been lured into purchasing unnecessary services.

SERVICE PERFORMANCE TRAINING

3.32 Prior to the launch of Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme, SWD organised briefing sessions for the staff of RSPs to familiarise them with the enhancement measures, service information and latest service development in Phase 3. During this phase, SWD organised sharing sessions on Service Quality Standards for RSPs to raise the understanding of non-profit-making organisations, social enterprises and private organisations about such standards. Through sharing daily operational experience, the sessions shed light on how to adhere to the 16 Service Quality Standards for delivery of CCS voucher services in such areas as enrolment of voucher holders in services, service options provided for voucher holders, withdrawal of voucher holders from services, and feedback or complaints. In the sharing sessions, RSPs were given examples on the best practices and application of the Service Quality Standards for improving CCS voucher services and promoting sustainable development. SWD said that the events in the past were effective and considered helpful by participants to deepen their understanding of the Pilot Scheme and strengthen their management skills. SWD plans to continue organising similar sharing sessions and training events in the future. Details of the sharing and briefing sessions organised by SWD between 2020 and 2022 are listed below.

Table 12: Sharing and briefing sessions organised by SWD for RSPs between 2020 and 2022

Date and type of training	Objectives	No. of RSP staff in attendance	No. of RSPs in attendance
22 Jun 2020 Briefing session for applicant organisations of the Pilot Scheme (webinar)	To highlight the service details and application procedures for organisations interested in joining Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme	135	56

Date and type of training	Objectives	No. of RSP staff in attendance	No. of RSPs in attendance
25 Sep 2020 Sharing session for RSPs (two webinars)	To promote awareness of the enhancement measures, service information and latest service development in Phase 3 and introduce the Service Quality Standards for management and frontline staff of RSPs, so as to facilitate their formulation of policies and guidelines according to the standards and provision of quality CCS voucher services	355	97
21 Jan 2022 Sharing session on Service Quality Standards for RSPs (webinar)	To enhance understanding of the criteria and requirements for service management and financial management through sharing of daily operational experience, and to share how to assist voucher holders to use CCS vouchers constantly, thereby supporting them to live in a familiar neighbourhood	297	103
30 Jun 2022 Briefing session for applicant organisations of the Pilot Scheme	To highlight the service details and application procedures for organisations interested in joining Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme	36	24
30 Nov 2022 Sharing session for RSPs (in-person seminar and webinar)	To share the latest development of the Pilot Scheme and to promote exchange of views among RSPs	274	92

(Note: Sharing and briefing sessions originally scheduled for 2021 were cancelled due to the pandemic.)

3.33 Moreover, a social worker of the CCS Voucher Office is assigned for each RSP of the Pilot Scheme as the liaison officer, who is responsible to assist the RSP in providing CCS voucher services as required and monitor its service levels. The CCS Voucher Office also has duty social workers to answer telephone enquiries, and the office will handle and follow up on any views received about the service levels of RSPs.

PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

3.34 Since Phase 1 of the Pilot Scheme, SWD has been promoting the CCS voucher services to eligible elderly persons and the public through various channels, including press conferences, press releases and blogs. In the newspaper and television interviews in September 2017 and September 2021 respectively, SWD explained the details and key features of the Pilot Scheme and invited RSPs of the Pilot Scheme to share real cases, so as to highlight the advantages of CCS vouchers to elderly persons and their carers.

3.35 Since all elderly persons eligible to apply for CCS vouchers are waitlisted for LTC services through their responsible workers, SWD also organised briefing sessions for the responsible workers handling elderly welfare matters to keep them abreast of the service information and latest development of the Pilot Scheme, which in turn could facilitate the application for CCS vouchers and selection of suitable RSPs and service packages by eligible elderly persons. Between 2013 and 2020, SWD had organised or attended 49 relevant briefing or sharing sessions in various districts to promote the Pilot Scheme to responsible workers and healthcare personnel. From time to time, the Centralised Team also disseminates information of newly added RSPs to responsible workers by email.

3.36 From time to time, SWD organises briefing and sharing sessions about its services and work to promote the Pilot Scheme at activity centres frequented by elderly persons, such as district elderly community centres, neighbourhood elderly centres and integrated family service centres, and distributes leaflets to responsible workers, elderly persons and their carers in various districts. While district-based promotion was suspended in 2021 due to the pandemic, SWD organised 28 such briefing and sharing sessions in various districts in 2022.

3.37 Moreover, details of the Pilot Scheme (e.g. service leaflets and information of RSPs) are available on the SWD's website for public access. Since Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme, the information has also been uploaded to SWD's Elderly Information Website. SWD has also produced a publicity video for Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme, which is available on the above websites and in CD-ROM format for distribution at district elderly community centres, neighbourhood elderly centres, day care centres or units for the elderly, etc.

4

SERVICE PLANNING AND SUPPLY AND DEMAND

PROJECTED DEMAND FOR LTC SERVICES

4.1 SWD pointed out that the ageing population in Hong Kong will generate an increasing demand for overall elderly services, including CCS and RCS. To strengthen the medium-and long-term planning for elderly services, the Government tasked in 2014 the Elderly Commission with formulating the Elderly Services Programme Plan ("the Programme Plan"). Announced in June 2017, the Programme Plan upheld the Government's elderly care policy of "ageing in place as the core, institutional care as backup", and projected the future demand for LTC services to shift gradually from a preference for RCS towards CCS by more elderly persons. According to the Programme Plan, it is estimated the demand for CCS will increase from 16,000 service places in 2016 to 32,000 service places in 2026. The table below shows the projection about demand for subsidised LTC services from the elderly.

Table 13: Projection about demand for subsidised LTC services from the elderly according to the Programme Plan

Year	RCS ('000)	CCS ('000)	Total demand for LTC services ('000)
2023	47	27	69
2024	47	29	70
2025	47	30	71
2026	46	32	72
2031	46	41	80
2036	54	47	92
2041	62	55	108
2046	68	62	120
2051	69	65	125
2056	67	63	121
2061	62	59	113
2064	60	57	108

(Note: The total demand for LTC services is not equivalent to the sum of demand for CCS and RCS because some elderly persons will use CCS while they are waitlisted for RCS, or are waitlisted for both CCS and RCS concurrently. They are included in the projection about demand for both CCS and RCS.)

4.2 Separately, the Government will follow the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines promogulated by the Planning Department in service planning as far as practicable to provide 17.2 subsidised CCS places per 1,000 elderly persons aged 65 or above.

MEASURES TO INCREASE SERVICE SUPPLY AND BALANCE SUPPLY AND DEMAND AT DISTRICT LEVEL

4.3 In recent years, the Government has allocated more resources on a number of occasions to increase the supply of subsidised CCS through a multi-pronged approach, which includes increasing the quota of CCS vouchers from 3,000 in 2017 to 8,000 at present.

4.4 According to SWD, the Pilot Scheme encourages participation of different types of RSPs, giving incentives to promote a more flexible and diversified market for elderly services. Under its "money-following-the-user" mode of financing, voucher holders can select RSPs that suit them, and service quality is enhanced through the action of market forces to better respond to the needs of users. Hence, SWD has been encouraging more organisations to join the Pilot Scheme. Back in Phase 1, there were eight pilot districts (i.e. Eastern, Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po, Sha Tin, Tai Po, Tsuen Wan and Tuen Mun) and only subvented NGOs and non-profit-making organisations or social enterprises were accepted to apply for becoming RSPs. In Phase 2, it was extended to cover all 18 districts in Hong Kong and private organisations were also eligible to become RSPs. Moreover, since July 2020, SWD has accepted organisations to apply for becoming RSPs throughout the year to better tie in with their service commencement plans and to expedite the vetting of applications. SWD has not set any limit on the number of RSPs and service places in each district.

4.5 When launching Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme in October 2020, SWD further revised the eligibility criteria for RSPs. In particular, medical institutions, or healthcare or rehabilitation service providers with direct experience in the provision of CCS for the elderly, are eligible to apply. The required period of service experience for organisations prior to joining the Pilot Scheme has been reduced from 12 to 6 months, thereby encouraging a wider range of service providers to participate and increasing service supply with more choices for voucher holders.

4.6 Since the launch of the Pilot Scheme, SWD has set up "seed money" for NGOs and non-profit-making organisations to apply for funding to cover the expenses required for service commencement. In Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme, for every 20 centre-based service places provided, organisations can apply for a maximum of $1.3

million to purchase a motor vehicle on an accountable basis. For provision of not less than 10 centre-based service places, organisations can apply for a maximum of $200,000 to purchase furniture or other equipment.

4.7 In Phase 1 of the Pilot Scheme (as at the end of August 2017), there were 62 RSPs providing an aggregate of 998 day care service places. In Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme (as at the end of December 2022), the number of RSPs increased to 250, providing an aggregate of 4,191 day care service places and 12,689 home care service places. As for CCS under traditional subvention mode, there were 13,365 home-based service places (with an average waiting time of six months) and 3,870 centre-based service places (with an average waiting time of five months) as at the end of December 2022.

4.8 The numbers of participating organisations, RSPs and service places in each phase of the Pilot Scheme are shown in **Table 14**.

Table 14: Numbers of participating organisations, RSPs and service places under the Pilot Scheme
(As at the end of December 2022)

Phase of Pilot Scheme		**Phase 1**		**Phase 2**		**Phase 3**	
Launched in		Sep 2013		Oct 2016		Oct 2020	
		Initial stage	Later stage	Initial stage	Later stage	Initial stage	Later stage
No. of participating organisations	Subvented NGO	29	29	32	38	38	38
	Non-profit-making organisation or social enterprise	2	2	4	8	13	17
	Private organisation	N/A		2	16	48	62
	Total	**31**	**31**	**38**	**62**	**99**	**117**
No. of RSPs operated by participating organisations	Subvented NGO	60	60	114	137	140	138
	Non-profit-making organisation or social enterprise	2	2	7	20	28	34
	Private organisation	N/A		3	22	62	78
	Total	**62**	**62**	**124**	**179**	**230**	**250**
No. of service places	Day care	881	998	2,081	3,250	3,869	4,191
	Home care	N/A		2,944	7,123	10,580	12,689
	Total	**881**	**998**	**5,025**	**10,373**	**14,449**	**16,880**

4.9 According to SWD's data, as at the end of December 2022, there were 10,046 voucher holders and 6,851 of them were using CCS voucher services (see **Table 6**). SWD believed that based on the current quota of 8,000 CCS vouchers, the overall service places should be sufficient. As for centre-based service places, data from Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme showed that around 50% of voucher users chose centre-based services[7]. Although a centre-based service place can be used by more than one voucher holder on different days or in different time slots, there are more constraints in transport arrangements and premises for day care centres. In districts with a larger elderly population (such as Kwun Tong, Sha Tin and Eastern, see **Table 15**), there is a greater demand for centre-based services, while more service vacancies are available in districts with a smaller elderly population (such as Islands, Wan Chai and Central and Western, see **Table 15**).

4.10 According to the 2021 Population Census conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, the population aged 60 or above in each district was as follows:

Table 15: Population aged 60 or above by district according to 2021 Population Census (In ascending order)

District	Population aged 60 or above
Islands	40,589
Wan Chai	45,974
Central and Western	61,217
Yau Tsim Mong	74,875
Southern	77,804
Tsuen Wan	81,768
North	85,395
Tai Po	89,372
Kowloon City	109,801
Sai Kung	116,086
Sham Shui Po	119,565
Wong Tai Sin	129,951
Tuen Mun	143,104
Kwai Tsing	149,995
Yuen Long	155,818
Eastern	167,490
Sha Tin	196,578
Kwun Tong	199,548
Total	**2,044,930**

4.11 The existing numbers of RSPs, service places, voucher users and elderly persons waitlisted for CCS on the Central Waiting List by district are set out as follows:

[7] Table 16 shows that as at the end of December 2022, there were a total of 6,851 users of CCS voucher services. Among them, 3,518 used centre-based services, and 4,712 used home-based services. There were 1,379 users of a mixed mode of both centre-based and home-based services.

Table 16: Supply and demand of CCS in different districts
(As at the end of December 2022)

District	No. of RSPs	No. of service places Note 1		No. of voucher holders using services in that district Note 2			No. of elderly persons waitlisted for CCS on Central Waiting List Note 3		
		Day care	Home care	Day care	Home care	Mixed mode	Day care	Home care	Total
Eastern	20	267	1,004	144	246	155	276	440	**716**
Wan Chai	11	161	1,100	105	443	9	31	128	**159**
Central and Western	6	80	215	43	87	26	40	173	**213**
Southern	12	134	382	75	104	23	130	203	**333**
Islands	2	20	50	8	5	8	27	101	**128**
Kwun Tong	22	497	970	334	290	204	115	442	**557**
Wong Tai Sin	17	382	716	228	281	137	216	318	**534**
Sai Kung	8	192	465	95	99	72	119	148	**267**
Sham Shui Po	23	320	1,071	107	170	48	33	207	**240**
Kowloon City	18	283	1,245	87	277	48	92	143	**235**
Yau Tsim Mong	22	219	1,420	51	238	38	45	114	**159**
Sha Tin	14	429	635	241	191	112	308	495	**803**
Tai Po	11	173	504	127	128	94	26	224	**250**
North	5	112	160	65	30	29	29	111	**140**
Kwai Tsing	22	364	1,061	109	247	136	49	366	**415**
Tsuen Wan	15	259	855	105	286	151	41	188	**229**
Tuen Mun	16	209	718	147	192	70	95	332	**427**
Yuen Long	6	90	118	68	19	19	99	190	**289**
Total	**250**	**4,191**	**12,689**	**2,139**	**3,333**	**1,379**	**1,771**	**4,323**	**6,094**

(Note 1: RSPs have not set any limit on the local and cross-district service places.
Note 2: Figures include cross-district users of services in that district.
Note 3: Figures exclude elderly persons classified as inactive cases due to participation in the Pilot Scheme.)

4.12 SWD said that it regularly examines the adequacy of CCS voucher services in each district based on the elderly population, number of service places and utilisation of CCS vouchers. SWD will disseminate relevant information through such activities as sharing and briefing sessions (see **para. 3.32**). Organisations are encouraged to increase service supply in districts with a larger elderly population or keen demand (i.e. where there are more voucher holders yet to start using services), and to change the mode of provision of services of service units from single mode to mixed mode. SWD will also share the reasons why some voucher holders have not utilised their CCS vouchers, thereby encouraging RSPs to diversify their services and expand service items and complementary services with higher demand, such as meal service and transportation service for day care centre users, to better align CCS voucher services with the needs of the elderly.

4.13 Take Wan Chai District as an example. It has a smaller elderly population but the Eastern District next to it has a larger elderly population and keen demand. Therefore, SWD has been encouraging RSPs in both districts to increase service supply and provide cross-district services, such that voucher holders have more choices. The number of RSPs in Wan Chai District increased from 2 in October 2016 to 11 in April 2022, and the service places increased from 31 to 161, representing a fourfold increase. In the Eastern District, the number of RSPs increased from 12 in October 2016 to 19 in April 2022, and the service places increased from 155 to 224, representing an increase of over 40%.

4.14 Voucher holders are free to select and switch RSPs. Through market forces under the "money-following-the-user" mode, RSPs are incentivised to provide services that better meet market needs. Based on such factors as business development direction, manpower, cost-effectiveness and premises, RSPs individually pick the district and service items to operate, thereby flexibly catering to voucher holders in various districts.

4.15 If voucher holders reside in the district where RSPs are approved to offer services, RSPs are not allowed to charge them additional transportation fees. On the other hand, when RSPs offer services to elderly persons outside their approved service districts, they may charge additional transportation fees with the consent of voucher holders or carers[8].

4.16 According to SWD's data, the number of RSPs offering cross-district services is set out as follows:

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8 According to the Service Specifications of Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme, RSPs may charge voucher holders additional fees for extra and/or non-essential services (such as traditional Chinese medicine treatments, aromatherapy and transportation fees for cross-district day care services) and items that exceed the voucher value, based on written agreements between RSPs and voucher holders. However, elderly persons cannot use the CCS voucher to pay for those extra or non-essential services.

Table 17: Number of RSPs offering cross-district services
(As at the end of December 2022)

District	No. of RSPs offering cross-district services for elderly persons in that district			
	Centre-based (Single mode)	Home-based (Single mode)	Mixed mode	Total
Eastern	2	45	6	53
Wan Chai	1	40	9	50
Central and Western	1	43	9	53
Southern	0	41	10	51
Islands	0	26	0	26
Kwun Tong	2	44	9	55
Wong Tai Sin	3	50	19	72
Sai Kung	1	39	8	48
Sham Shui Po	3	48	14	65
Kowloon City	2	46	16	64
Yau Tsim Mong	3	42	12	57
Sha Tin	3	49	6	58
Tai Po	1	44	7	52
North	3	47	6	56
Kwai Tsing	1	48	13	62
Tsuen Wan	4	45	17	66
Tuen Mun	2	42	4	48
Yuen Long	2	49	5	56

(Note: RSPs listed above were not located in the respective district but were able to provide cross-district services for elderly persons residing in that district.)

4.17 SWD has not maintained statistics on the number of voucher holders currently using cross-district home-based services in each district. As for centre-based services, the number of voucher holders currently using cross-district services in each district is set out as follows:

Table 18: Number of voucher holders using cross-district centre-based services
(As at the end of December 2022)

District	No. of voucher holders residing in that district using centre-based services of RSPs in another district
Eastern	86
Wan Chai	4
Central and Western	3
Southern	8
Islands	-

District	No. of voucher holders residing in that district using centre-based services of RSPs in another district
Kwun Tong	24
Wong Tai Sin	63
Sai Kung	13
Sham Shui Po	12
Kowloon City	30
Yau Tsim Mong	9
Sha Tin	17
Tai Po	7
North	7
Kwai Tsing	76
Tsuen Wan	1
Tuen Mun	6
Yuen Long	5
Total	**371**

4.18 SWD remarked that with the increasing number of RSPs under the Pilot Scheme and their ability to adjust service coverage according to demand, the service places in each district can generally meet the existing service demand.

SERVICES FOR ELDERLY PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA OR DYSPHAGIA

4.19 As at the end of December 2022, 27 of the 250 RSPs under the Pilot Scheme specialised in the care of elderly persons with dementia, providing 582 centre-based service places and 421 home-based service places. The remaining 223 RSPs also offer services for elderly persons with dementia.

4.20 Currently, there are no RSPs specialising in the care of elderly persons with dementia in four districts, namely Islands, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon City and North. However, there are two and three RSPs specialising in the care of elderly persons with dementia located in two other districts respectively that offer cross-district services for voucher holders in Sham Shui Po and Kowloon City. SWD said that RSPs generally can provide such services as reminiscence therapy, reality orientation and cognitive training to alleviate the cognitive impairment of elderly persons with dementia. Voucher holders residing in the above-mentioned four districts can access the services of these RSPs.

4.21 Separately, as at December 2022, there were 230 and 180 RSPs offering speech therapy service and soft meal service respectively for elderly persons with dysphagia.

4.22 The number of RSPs offering services for elderly persons with dementia or dysphagia in each district and the number of their service places are listed below.

Table 19: Number of RSPs specialising in the care of elderly persons with dementia and number of service places in different districts (As at the end of December 2022)

District	No. of RSPs specialising in the care of elderly persons with dementia	No. of centre-based service places	No. of home-based service places
Eastern	1	7	24
Wan Chai	3	65	30
Central and Western	1	20	5
Southern	2	28	10
Islands	0	0	0
Kwun Tong	4	110	106
Wong Tai Sin	2	40	10
Sai Kung	2	35	25
Sham Shui Po	0	0	0
Kowloon City	0	0	0
Yau Tsim Mong	1	40	60
Sha Tin	2	35	5
Tai Po	1	50	35
North	0	0	0
Kwai Tsing	1	10	50
Tsuen Wan	2	64	45
Tuen Mun	3	48	8
Yuen Long	2	30	8
Total	**27**	**582**	**421**

(Note: RSPs can provide cross-district services.)

Table 20: Number of RSPs offering speech therapy service and soft meal service in different districts (As at the end of December 2022)

District	No. of RSPs offering speech therapy service	No. of RSPs offering soft meal service
Eastern	18	16
Wan Chai	10	8
Central and Western	5	5
Southern	11	9
Islands	1	1
Kwun Tong	22	19
Wong Tai Sin	16	12
Sai Kung	7	6
Sham Shui Po	20	16
Kowloon City	16	12
Yau Tsim Mong	19	10
Sha Tin	12	11
Tai Po	11	9
North	5	5
Kwai Tsing	22	18
Tsuen Wan	13	9
Tuen Mun	16	9
Yuen Long	6	5
Total	**230**	**180**

(Note: Figures only indicate the number of RSPs located in each district. RSPs can provide cross-district services. Services are available in both centre-based and home-based modes.)

5

EVALUATION OF THE PILOT SCHEME AND ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

EVALUATION OF THE PILOT SCHEME

5.1 In 2013 and 2017, SWD commissioned the Sau Po Centre on Ageing ("Sau Po Centre") of The University of Hong Kong to conduct evaluation study and review the effectiveness of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme respectively. During the evaluation study of Phase 2, members of SWD's Centralised Team, referring social workers, management and frontline staff of RSPs, elderly persons and carers were interviewed. The study found that with more CCS options available, the Pilot Scheme effectively improved the subjective feeling of health and quality of life for frail elderly persons, and reduced their carers' stress and burden. The major enhancement features of the scheme met the needs of service users, and longer-term voucher users were more willing to age in place.

5.2 On 11 January 2016 and 13 July 2020, SWD reported the progress of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme respectively to the Legislative Council's Panel on Welfare Services, including a briefing on the evaluation findings and recommendations. After the launch of our direct investigation and in response to public views that the evaluation reports on the Pilot Scheme should be published, SWD uploaded the executive summary or the part relating to recommendations of the Sau Po Centre's reports to its website on 27 July 2022 for public information.

ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

5.3 After considering the comments and recommendations of Sau Po Centre, SWD introduced enhancements in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme to increase its flexibility and supply of services and provide more choices to suit the diverse needs of elderly persons. The details of enhancement measures are listed as follows:

Table 21: Enhancement measures introduced by SWD in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme

(1) Service Delivery Mode	
Measures in Phase 1 of the Pilot Scheme	• Single Mode: Day care (part-time); or • Mixed Mode: Day care (part-time) and home care
Relevant comments and recommendations	• Users should not be limited to two options of two service modes only. A more flexible and personalised approach should be adopted to allow users to select the service mode and package that best support their living in the community.
Enhancements introduced in Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme	• Voucher holders can freely choose centre-based (full-time or part-time) or home-based service, including: o CCS solely in centre-based mode (full-time or part-time); o CCS solely in home-based mode; o mixed mode with centre-based and home-based services • To further promote "ageing in place", voucher holders can utilise their monthly voucher value to purchase residential respite service. RSPs are required to submit to SWD a list of partnering elderly care homes, and can provide residential respite service after obtaining SWD's approval.
Relevant comments and recommendations	• To increase the supply and utilisation of residential respite service
Enhancements introduced in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme	• Where a voucher holder is in urgent need of residential respite service but the elderly care homes in partnership with the RSP have no vacancy, the RSP can arrange for admission of the voucher holder to an elderly care home not on the partnership list and notify SWD's Centralised Team subsequently. This is to prevent administrative procedures from causing delay or unavailability of residential respite service for needy elderly persons.
(2) Eligibility criteria for RSPs	
Measures in Phase 1 of the Pilot Scheme	• NGOs subvented by SWD and non-profit-making organisations or social enterprises should have experience of providing elderly services, either CCS or RCS. • As at the end of August 2017, there were 62 RSPs

	operated by 29 NGOs subvented by SWD and 2 non-profit-making organisations or social enterprises.
Relevant comments and recommendations	• To encourage more NGOs and social enterprises to become RSPs, and also enlist private organisations, thereby increasing the number of service providers to enhance the quality and diversity of services
Enhancements introduced in Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme	• The eligibility of RSPs was extended to include private organisations with continuous experience of directly providing elderly care services for not less than 12 months prior to the application date. • As at the end of September 2020, there were 179 RSPs operated by 38 NGOs subvented by SWD, 8 non-profit-making organisations or social enterprises and 16 eligible private organisations.
Relevant comments and recommendations	• To expand the pool of RSPs and consider: o other service operators (not limited to operators of elderly services), such as medical and rehabilitation service operators with relevant experience in CCS voucher services; and o informal support from persons such as neighbours, friends, family members or even foreign domestic helpers as potential RSPs
Enhancements introduced in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme	• The eligibility criteria for RSPs were revised to increase service supply. • Medical institutions, or healthcare or rehabilitation service providers with experience of directly providing CCS for the elderly are eligible to apply. • The period of continuous experience was reduced from 12 to six months prior to joining the Pilot Scheme. • The eligibility criteria for private organisations were aligned with those for subvented NGOs. • As at the end of December 2022, there were 250 RSPs operated by 38 NGOs subvented by SWD, 17 non-profit-making organisations or social enterprises and 62 eligible private organisations (see **Table 14**). • The Labour and Welfare Bureau has commissioned the Consultancy Study on Needs and Support Required of Carers of Elderly Persons and of Persons with Disabilities in Hong Kong to facilitate formulation of directions for supporting

	carers.
(3) Voucher values	
Measures in Phase 1 of the Pilot Scheme	• Single voucher value • Adjusted annually based on the Composite Consumer Price Index • Users could pay extra to purchase more services
Relevant comments and recommendations	• To replace single voucher value with different voucher values based on the usage pattern of service users
Enhancements introduced in Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme	• Five different levels of voucher values • Voucher holders can pay extra to purchase more services from RSPs at a value higher than their CCS vouchers • Voucher values and co-payment amounts to be adjusted annually based on the Composite Consumer Price Index • RSPs were required to publish the prices of service packages and individual CCS items
Relevant comments and recommendations	• Voucher values should be set within a floor and ceiling range, allowing users more flexibility in purchasing services priced between the two values to meet their individual needs. It could also minimise the administrative costs incurred by RSPs in formulating service packages confined to the five pre-set voucher values. • The funding level for RSPs should be reviewed regularly to make joining the Pilot Scheme a financially viable and sustainable option, particularly for potential participants which are not traditional CCS providers.
Enhancements introduced in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme	• The former multi-level values of CCS vouchers were replaced by floor and ceiling values, allowing users to obtain services according to their needs, enhancing the flexibility of service packages, and reducing the administrative workload of RSPs.
(4) Co-payment and means test	
Measures in Phase 1 of the Pilot Scheme	• There were five categories of co-payment, based on the household financial condition of users. The co-payment amounts to be made by elderly users were fixed (i.e. $500, $750, $1,000, $1,500 or $2,500) and would not change despite the annual increase of voucher values based on the

	Composite Consumer Price Index. • SWD conducted a means test to assess the household income, excluding assets. The level of household income for each co-payment category was set with reference to the quarterly Median Monthly Domestic Household Income released by the Census and Statistics Department.
Relevant comments and recommendations	• Co-payment amounts should be based on means test
Enhancements introduced in Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme	• There were six incremental categories of co-payment, based on the household financial condition of users. Elderly users were required to pay co-payment amounts at 5%, 8%, 12%, 16%, 25% or 40% of CCS voucher values. The co-payment amounts were adjusted annually based on the Composite Consumer Price Index. • The six incremental categories of co-payment included a new category specially created for recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance. • The means test mechanism remained unchanged.
(5) Local collaboration	
Measures in Phase 1 of the Pilot Scheme	• No relevant measures
Relevant comments and recommendations	• To provide continuous training on the Pilot Scheme to inform responsible workers and RSPs of its latest development, and to create a user-friendly communication platform for disseminating latest information directly to all stakeholders • To increase the involvement of District Social Welfare Offices in the implementation of the Pilot Scheme
Enhancements introduced in Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme	• SWD established the Centralised Team to monitor services and provide voucher holders with dedicated support and assistance jointly with responsible workers
Relevant comments and recommendations	• To strengthen collaboration between the Centralised Team and responsible workers
Enhancements introduced in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme	• The Centralised Team organises briefing sessions from time to time, such as: o inviting responsible workers handling elderly welfare matters to attend and learn about the

	service information and latest development of the Pilot Scheme, so that they can assist elderly persons in applying for CCS vouchers and selecting suitable RSPs and service packages, and encourage elderly persons to use individual service items; o in collaboration with local units, organising sharing sessions to promote the Pilot Scheme and introduce the latest development; and o in collaboration with RSPs, organising sharing sessions on Service Quality Standards, online training on computer system, briefing sessions for RSPs in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme, etc.
(6) Service targets and coverage	
Measures in Phase 1 of the Pilot Scheme	• Covering eight districts • Service targeting elderly persons with moderate impairment
Relevant comments and recommendations	• To expand coverage to all districts for better service accessibility
Enhancements introduced in Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme	• Coverage was expanded from eight districts to include all 18 districts across Hong Kong • Service targets were expanded from elderly persons with moderate impairment to include those with severe impairment
(7) Strengthening information technology system	
Enhancements introduced in Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme	• SWD set up a computer information system specifically for internal use within the Pilot Scheme to record data related to invitation letters issued to eligible elderly persons, applications for CCS vouchers submitted by elderly persons, CCS vouchers issued after assessment, enrolments in or withdrawals from RSPs, and withdrawals from the Pilot Scheme. The system was managed and used by staff of CCS Voucher Office.
Relevant comments and recommendations	• To develop an advanced computer system facilitating voucher holders' access to information about RSPs and the Pilot Scheme, thereby minimising the administrative workload of RSPs and applying information technology solutions to improve the efficiency of information sharing

	between RSPs and the Centralised Team • To allow voucher holders to use CCS vouchers in more than one RSP concurrently
Enhancements introduced in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme	• The information technology system has been enhanced to improve service efficiency and facilitate service planning. SWD is also exploring new measures for service users to access necessary CCS services from different RSPs concurrently, which are expected to be implemented in the third quarter of 2023.

Establishment of the Centralised Team

5.4 One of the recommendations made by the Sau Po Centre after evaluating and reviewing the effectiveness of Phase 1 of the Pilot Scheme was that SWD should provide continuous training to responsible workers and RSPs to inform them of the latest development of the scheme. SWD should also create a user-friendly communication platform for disseminating latest information directly to all stakeholders. Consequently, SWD set up the Centralised Team[9] under the CCS Voucher Office to step up the monitoring of RSPs. The team also serves as the first point of contact for potential voucher users and supports responsible workers, enabling them to assist voucher holders, users and carers more effectively on the front line.

5.5 SWD stated that the Centralised Team would collaborate with responsible workers to jointly support voucher users. In comparison with engaging an external party to handle such tasks, the Centralised Team familiar with the operations of the Pilot Scheme can provide voucher holders and responsible workers with more direct and focused support.

5.6 Where necessary, voucher holders and carers can seek support and assistance from their responsible workers or the Centralised Team, such as providing information on the Pilot Scheme and RSPs, answering enquiries, assisting elderly persons in deciding whether to apply for CCS vouchers, selecting suitable RSPs and service packages based on their specific circumstances, switching RSPs where necessary, changing co-payment categories and updating personal data. The Centralised Team and responsible workers can assist voucher holders, users and their carers in parallel. When approached by elderly persons or their carers for assistance and with their consent, the Centralised Team will contact their responsible workers as necessary.

5.7 Moreover, when SWD writes to invite application for joining the Pilot Scheme or issues the notification of issuance of voucher to elderly persons, and when new cases are enrolled by RSPs, all correspondence is copied to the responsible workers

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[9] Regarding staff establishment, the Centralised Team of the CSS Voucher Office had 15, 20, 22, 22 and 22 posts of the social work and clerical grades in 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 respectively.

to keep them informed of the latest application progress and service usage of the elderly persons.

5.8 SWD stated that the enquiries received by the Centralised Team have decreased with the higher public awareness of CCS vouchers since Phase 1 of the Pilot Scheme. The number of voucher holders, carers, responsible workers and RSPs assisted by the Centralised Team between 2017 and 2022, as well as the type of assistance rendered, are listed as follows:

Table 22: Number of voucher holders and relevant parties assisted by the Centralised Team and type of assistance rendered

Type of assistance rendered	No. of persons assisted in each year					
	2017	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Information of the Pilot Scheme	3,297	2,050	2,278	2,597	2,458	1,684
Means for Application for CCS vouchers	992	1,299	1,378	1,237	1,110	1,029
Selection of suitable RSPs or service packages	238	172	165	112	55	72
Others (such as switching RSPs and general enquiry on elderly services)	784	695	747	553	167	279
Total	**5,311**	**4,216**	**4,568**	**4,499**	**3,790**	**3,064**

(Note: Figures include voucher holders, carers, responsible workers and RSPs.)

Improvements to Information Technology System

5.9 SWD is currently exploring improvements to the current information technology system and developing an electronic platform with more convenient services and information for voucher applicants or holders. Voucher holders will be able to process real-time checks on information about their CCS vouchers and service records as well as the vacancy for service places of RSPs. On the other hand, RSPs can also update the vacancy for service places via the electronic platform, submit relevant documents under the Pilot Scheme and apply for reimbursement of the government subsidies, so as to streamline their administrative work. The enhancements to the system are expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2023.

Support for Carers

5.10 Under the Pilot Scheme, the carers of elderly persons often act as the bridge of communication between the elderly and SWD, responsible workers and RSPs. Carers having any questions or comments about the elderly person's application or use of CCS vouchers may contact SWD or responsible workers for assistance.

5.11 Separately, the Government has completed the Consultancy Study on Needs and Support Required of Carers of Elderly Persons and of Persons with Disabilities in Hong Kong, and agreed in principle with the recommendations in the consultancy report. To provide effective and timely support to the carers of elderly persons and persons with disabilities, the Government will implement a wide range of measures gradually from 2023, including:

(1) from October 2023, regularising the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families, the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities, the Special Care Subsidy for the Severely Disabled, and the Pilot Scheme on Providing Subsidy for Higher Disability Allowance Recipients in Paid Employment to Hire Carers, and increasing the amount of subsidy and the number of beneficiaries under those schemes;

(2) setting up a one-stop information gateway for carers to facilitate access to service information;

(3) setting up a designated hotline to provide emergency support and outreach services for carers;

(4) increasing the number of respite service places to relieve pressure on the carers of elderly persons and persons with disabilities, and enhancing the vacancy enquiry system to cover day respite care service; and

(5) organising territory-wide publicity and education campaigns to raise public awareness of the needs of carers, and promote community-based peer support for carers.

CONCLUSION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PILOT SCHEME AND WAY FORWARD

5.12 SWD stated that the Pilot Scheme is different from traditional subsidised services. It adopts the “money-following-the-user” mode, where voucher holders can select or switch RSPs and service packages based on their needs. RSPs then apply for reimbursement of government subsidies on an accountable basis based on the values of service packages purchased monthly by voucher holders, contrary to the traditional subvention mode where the Government grants a fixed amount of subsidies directly to the organisations for provision of services to beneficiaries. In other words, RSPs must offer services that meet the needs of users and maintain service quality to retain them. This funding mode empowers voucher users, transforming them from welfare recipients to consumers who have a choice of services. RSPs are driven by market competition to improve services continuously and gain a competitive edge.

5.13 In addition, the Pilot Scheme introduces the "affordable users pay" principle, under which elderly persons are subsidised by the Government at 60% to 95% based on their financial condition. The "co-payment" principle encourages voucher holders to select carefully the required services, and ensures more effective use of resources. SWD pointed out that under the traditional subvention mode, the monthly costs for day care service and home care service are budgeted at around $12,191 and $9,590 per person respectively (see **para. 2.6**), while the value of services purchased from RSPs by each voucher user averages $5,700 monthly, indicating that the Pilot Scheme is cost-effective to a certain extent and conducive to the financial sustainability of CCS.

5.14 Due to the adoption of a novel funding mode, SWD stated that it has been reviewing the Pilot Scheme and adjusting its arrangements continuously, with various measures introduced in each phase (see **Table 21**) to explore how to fully leverage the advantages of the new mode and enhance the service volume, flexibility and sustainability while ensuring the quality of CCS. It takes time to test and gradually refine the specific operation of the Pilot Scheme.

5.15 SWD considered that with the three phases of the Pilot Scheme implemented, the acceptance of the scheme by elderly persons and service providers has continued to increase. From September 2013 to December 2022, the number of voucher users had increased from 539 to 6,851 per month, with a cumulative total of more than 10,000 current or former voucher users (see **Table 6**). The number of service places provided by RSPs had also increased from 881 to 16,880 (see **Table 14**). Moreover, the Pilot Scheme provides CCS for elderly persons in a flexible and timely manner.

5.16 According to the Central Waiting List, the number of elderly persons eligible for CCS vouchers between 2017/18 and 2022/23 is listed as follows:

Table 23: Number of elderly persons on Central Waiting List

Year (At year end)	No. of elderly persons waitlisted for subsidised CCS or RCS on Central Waiting List and eligible for CCS vouchers	No. of elderly persons classified as inactive cases on Central Waiting List	Total
2017/18	22,746	3,871	26,617
2018/19	25,538	4,384	29,922
2019/20	25,048	4,857	29,905
2020/21	23,532	5,754	29,286
2021/22	17,233	13,457	30,690
2022/23 (As at end of Dec 2022)	13,184	17,192	30,376

5.17 SWD gave the following reasons for the lower number of elderly persons on the Central Waiting List and more inactive cases over the past two years:

(1) The Government has increased the supply of various subsidised services in recent years (including CCS vouchers), thereby shortening the waiting time and reduced the number of elderly persons on the Central Waiting List. For example, the average waiting time for subsidised home care service was significantly reduced from 13 months at the end of 2017 to six months at the end of 2022.

(2) Since July 2017, to further encourage ageing in place, elderly persons waitlisted for subsidised RCS can opt to change their applications to inactive cases based on personal preference. Applicants or current users of CCS vouchers can also opt to continue waiting for subsidised CCS or RCS, or change their applications to inactive cases.

(3) The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the willingness of elderly persons to move into care homes, and many of them have changed their waiting status to inactive cases.

5.18 As at the end of December 2022, around 13,000 elderly persons were on the Central Waiting List for subsidised LTC services and eligible to apply for CCS vouchers (see **Table 23**); the waiting time for home care service and day care service was six and five months respectively (see **para. 4.7**). CCS vouchers offer an additional option for the elderly persons on the waiting list to obtain services without waiting, and also to switch services or RSPs as necessary. SWD considered that while public resources will not be wasted (see **para. 2.44**), the model of CCS vouchers enables elderly persons to age in place with peace of mind. As and when they require CCS, they can use the approved vouchers to meet the needs, and the supply and demand of CCS services will be regulated by the market.

5.19 Both **Table 13** and **Table 23** show an increasing demand for CCS among the elderly. The Chief Executive has stated in the 2022 Policy Address that the Pilot Scheme will be regularised in the third quarter of 2023 and the number of beneficiaries will increase by 50% in phases, from 8,000 at present to 12,000 in 2025/26[10]. The coverage of the Pilot Scheme will also be expanded to include rental of assistive technology products.

5.20 According to SWD, Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme will end in September 2023 and evaluation through collecting the opinions of RSPs and stakeholders by questionnaire survey and other means as well as collecting and analysing other relevant data is in progress. SWD is examining the implementation of various measures and considering stakeholders' opinions to adjust the implementation details of the Pilot Scheme in a timely manner, with a view to aligning the service model with the LTC needs of elderly persons before regularising the Pilot Scheme.

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[10] To increase service supply in an orderly manner, the Government will increase the number of beneficiaries of CCS vouchers steadily in phases, from 8,000 at present to 10,000 by September 2023, 11,000 in 2024/25, and eventually 12,000 in 2025/26.

6

SITE INSPECTIONS AND CASE STUDIES

SITE INSPECTIONS

6.1 For better understanding of SWD's conduct of service monitoring visits on RSPs (including both centre-based and home-based services), we arranged site inspections on a private RSP and an RSP operated by an NGO in February and March 2023 respectively to check how SWD staff actually conducted such visits. We notice that SWD has formulated internal guidelines for the conduct of service monitoring visits and a checklist to facilitate staff's discharge of duties and recording of the results.

PRIVATE RSP A

<u>Service Monitoring Visit (on Centre-based Service)</u>

6.2 RSP A is located in Central Kowloon, providing a total of 100 home-based service places covering all the 18 districts throughout the territory. In February 2023, our staff joined two SWD staff members (a social work officer and an assistant social work officer) in a surprise check on RSP A. RSP A's staff said the in-charge person (an occupational therapist) was carrying out fieldwork and would be called back immediately. Hence, SWD staff proceeded to check RSP A's document before a thorough examination on the files and service records of three selected CCS voucher users. During the visit, SWD staff had taken the following steps:

(1) examined RSP A's organisation chart and the in-charge person's name card and his occupational therapist registration number to confirm that the RSP's operation and provision of services were under a professional's supervision;

(2) checked the information on RSP A's "Service Users Notes" including enrolment of service plans, making-up sessions, termination of services and devising of service packages. SWD staff found inaccurate information on service hours in the Notes;

(3) examined RSP A's price list to check whether the price setting was in accordance with the Service Agreement signed with SWD;

(4) examined RSP A's leaflet to check whether the information on service districts, service places, service hours, contents and scope of services was in line with the Service Agreement. SWD staff found that the service hours shown on the leaflets were 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., which were inaccurate and should be amended as 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and that the leaflets should indicate that a surcharge of 20% would be charged for provision of services beyond normal service hours;

(5) examined RSP A's insurance document and the income and expenditure documents prepared for CCS voucher services;

(6) checked whether RSP A had set procedures for complaint handling and prepared relevant documents and whether they were up to SWD's quality standards;

(7) RSP A mentioned that comments on services had been received from service users. For example, meals prepared by home helpers tasted good, and a therapist could not get along well with elderly persons. SWD staff recommended that RSP A record comments made verbally by service users;

(8) checked RSP A's documents relating to safety policy and procedures. SWD staff recommended that safety measures at service users' home should be included in those documents. For example, helpers should wear a mask during their stay in users' home, and what caring arrangements should be made for users in case of injury;

(9) RSP A indicated that it did not have records of accidents during provision of services because no accident had taken place;

(10) examined file records of the three selected CCS voucher users for the period between November 2022 and January 2023. The services used by those three elderly persons included personal care, rehabilitation exercise and home service. SWD staff examined the following documents in the file records:

a. the original CCS voucher;
b. the original receipt issued by the RSP upon receiving the original CCS voucher;
c. the service plan enrolment or termination form;
d. the ICP formulated by RSP A for the elderly person, whether the ICP was formulated within one month after the elderly person's enrolment of service plan, whether RSP A had assessed the elderly

person's personal care needs every six months and whether the ICP could meet the objectives, etc. The in-charge person of RSP A said they sought comments on the ICPs from users or their carers by telephone. SWD staff recommended that the RSP record the dates of such telephone conversations and the name of the interviewees and, if possible, request the user concerned to sign to confirm the comments made;

e. the documents relating to the insurance for home helpers and the professional liability insurance for the physiotherapist and occupational therapist. SWD staff recommended that the aforesaid insurance documents be kept in the file of the user concerned. Besides, SWD staff found that one of the therapists had not purchased professional liability insurance and the Department instructed RSP A to encourage the therapist to do so;

f. the records of users' signature to acknowledge receipt of services. SWD staff made a comparison between such records and the monthly service records submitted to the Department by RSP A and found that the RSP had reported half an hour more than the actual time of care services provided to a user. Hence, SWD staff instructed RSP A to make up the half an hour's service for the elderly person concerned;

g. the registration number of the professionals having served the elderly persons.

6.3 SWD staff reminded RSP A that improvement should be made as regards items (2), (4) and (10)d to (10)f above. Besides, RSP A was required to provide a copy of the revised leaflet and the Service Users Notes to SWD within two weeks, and to notify SWD after making up the outstanding half an hour's care services to the elderly person concerned. SWD staff also recommended that RSP A require the physiotherapist and occupational therapist to submit information on the users' progress for record after providing services. SWD took about two hours to complete this service monitoring visit.

<u>Service Monitoring Visit (on Home-based Service)</u>

6.4 Later on the same day, our staff joined SWD staff in visiting the residence of an elderly person living in Island East ("Ms B"). Ms B was in her nineties, mobility-handicapped and under the care of her son. With the assistance of her family, she used CCS vouchers to purchase weekly home service provided by RSP A's physiotherapist and each service session lasted for 2 hours and 15 minutes. When our staff and SWD staff arrived at Ms B's residence, the physiotherapist was helping her to do rehabilitation exercise.

6.5 During the visit, SWD staff started with asking Ms B's son about the use of CCS vouchers, RSP A and home-based rehabilitation service and inviting his comments. Her son said he arranged Ms B's appointments with the therapist, who arrived and

provided services on schedule while the domestic helper signed the service acknowledgement receipt. The therapist regularly informed him of Ms B's condition or rehabilitation progress. He considered his mother's physical condition improved after using the services, and he knew clearly how to use CCS vouchers. He explained that they chose CCS voucher services because no one in the family was available for taking care of mobility-handicapped Ms B, making it difficult for her to go to a day centre. Traditional services take time to wait and the service provision might not be adequate. Besides, traditional meal service might not suit the needs of Ms B. CCS vouchers provide solutions to these problems.

6.6 Later, SWD enquired about the therapist's registration number, the record on the progress of Ms B's case and the record of service acknowledgement receipt of February. Moreover, SWD staff suggested that Ms B's son remind the domestic helper to check the accuracy of the service hours listed on the receipt before signing it. Before leaving, SWD staff gave Ms B's son their name cards and told him that he could contact them at any time to give comments on or enquire about the CCS voucher scheme or RSP A. SWD staff took about one hour to complete the service monitoring visit.

RSP B Managed by an NGO

6.7 RSP B is located in New Territories West, serving elderly persons suffering from dementia in the region. Currently, RSP B offers 20 elderly day centre service places and three home service places. Part of the elderly day centre is reserved for provision of services to CCS voucher holders.

<u>Service Monitoring Visit (on Home-based Service)</u>

6.8 In March 2023, our staff joined two SWD staff members (a social work officer and an assistant social work officer) in a service monitoring visit at the residence of two elderly persons ("Ms C and Mr D") in the region. Ms C and Mr D, i.e. the elderly couple, were both about 80 years of age and suffering from dementia. On the day of visit, Mr D had a one-hour session of occupational therapy at home. Before the therapist arrived, SWD staff interviewed the elderly couple and their domestic helper to understand their use of CCS vouchers, RSP B and home-based rehabilitation service and invited their comments. They said Mr D had purchased weekly home service of occupational therapy and each session lasted for one hour. Mr D would also visit a day centre three times a week while Ms C would visit it once a week. The day centre would arrange escort service between the housing estate and the centre for the elderly couple. Staff of the day care centre would contact the domestic helper to confirm the location and time for picking them up. SWD staff indicated that they would contact the daughter of Ms C and Mr D (their carer, who would liaise with RSP B and SWD) later to confirm the couple's usage of CCS vouchers and relevant services.

6.9 When RSP B's occupational therapist later arrived, SWD staff asked her about the service workflow and her registration number. The therapist said she would submit the user's progress record to RSP B after finishing each therapy session.

Afterwards, the therapist gave occupational therapy to Mr D at the living room, and SWD staff had observed it for 15 minutes before leaving. SWD staff took about one hour to complete the service monitoring visit.

Service Monitoring Visit (on Centre-based Service)

6.10 Later on that day, our staff followed SWD staff to the day centre operated by RSP B. Upon arriving at the day centre, SWD officers informed the centre staff that it was a surprise service monitoring visit and then produced their staff cards. We noticed that a list showing the services provided at the centre and the relevant charges was posted on the notice board near the entrance of the centre.

6.11 The centre staff arranged a CCS voucher user who was an elderly using the day centre service at the time (Mr E, an elderly person aged 77) to meet with SWD staff. Mr E was then interviewed by SWD staff on how he found the CCS vouchers and services provided by the centre. He said he had been using CCS vouchers for a year to purchase day care centre services five days a week for rehabilitation exercise and interest classes, through which he had made some friends. He was satisfied with the centre's services because the centre staff was caring and they showed concern for his health condition and would check his blood pressure. The centre would also change the breakfast and afternoon tea menus.

6.12 After the interview, the centre's in-charge person (a registered social worker) and staff members led SWD staff and our staff to the areas reserved for CCS voucher services including an office, a rehabilitation training room, an activity room and a canteen. SWD staff checked whether the setting and facilities met the requirements in the Service Agreement signed between the centre and SWD, and whether the number of persons served had exceeded the approved quota. Besides, SWD staff examined the equipment such as sign posts and fire extinguishers in the centre. We noticed that a daily activity list or schedule was displayed at a conspicuous spot in the centre for elderly users' information.

Figure 3: The daily timetable of RSP B's day centre



6.13 Subsequently, the centre staff brought CCS voucher related documents to SWD staff for inspection, the procedures for which were similar to those mentioned in paragraphs **6.2(1) to 6.2(10)** above. SWD staff found that the Service Agreement signed between the day centre and CCS voucher holders did not bear the date of signing and the name of the undersigned (user or carer). According to the centre's in-charge person, comments on ICPs were sought from users or carers by telephone. SWD staff suggested that the centre record the date of such telephone interviews, the names of interviewees and whether those interviewees agreed with the contents of ICPs. SWD staff also suggested that the centre include in the records of users' service acknowledgement receipt the actual service time as well as add a column to the receipt for domestic helpers' signature. SWD staff reminded the centre's in-charge person to make improvement accordingly.

6.14 Finally, SWD staff checked two exercise bikes, rehabilitation equipment and a minibus for escorting elderly persons which were purchased with SWD's seed funding, and asked the centre's in-charge person about the utilisation of such equipment or facilities. SWD examined the hygiene and tidiness of the interior of the minibus and asked about the safety measures for elderly persons on board (e.g. installation of closed-circuit television and the buckles for securing wheelchairs on the minibus) and arrangements for picking up elderly persons. SWD staff spent more than two hours to complete the service monitoring visit.

Figure 4: The day centre's minibus for escorting elderly persons



CASE STUDIES

6.15 We randomly selected 10 elderly users of Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme and examined the documents relating to their joining and leaving the scheme, which include SWD's letter to invite applications for joining the Pilot Scheme, application forms submitted by the elderly persons and the correspondence between SWD and the elderly persons, so as to understand the operation of the scheme and the communication among parties.

6.16 Records of these 10 cases reveal that SWD's invitation letter, notice of household means test, notification of issuance of vouchers and notice of withdrawal from the Pilot Scheme were copied to the responsible workers of the cases to alert them so that they could take follow-up action when necessary. In two cases, when the RSP concerned collected the CCS vouchers from the elderly persons for provision of services (i.e. admitting a case) and when the elderly persons discontinued their use of the RSP's services, the RSP informed SWD and the responsible workers concerned of the matters in writing.

6.17 Moreover, in four cases, SWD staff had called the elderly persons concerned, their carers or responsible workers to confirm the correspondence address of the elderly persons and enquire about the details of household financial documents submitted by the elderly persons or their families, and sent application forms for CCS voucher services to the elderly persons again. We noticed that SWD's telephone records were concise without mentioning any communication problems between the elderly persons or their carers, RSPs, SWD and responsible workers on the Pilot Scheme or any enquiries about the scheme by the elderly persons or their carers.

6.18 SWD had selected two of the aforesaid 10 cases to undertake household means tests. The applicants concerned were required to submit copies of document

proof for household income three months prior to their submission of application. Subsequently, SWD found in both cases that the reported household income was less than the actual amount. The elderly person in one of the cases reported a monthly household income of $1,800, but the actual amount was found by SWD to be $6,600. In the other case, the elderly person reported that there was no household income but SWD found a monthly household income of $1,500 after examining the case.

6.19 Besides, we noticed that in all these cases, SWD granted CCS vouchers and sent notification of issuance of vouchers within two to four weeks on receiving the application form or household income document proof. We are of the view that the handling time in these cases was reasonable and that it was within the time frame laid down by SWD (see **para. 2.12**).

7

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OUR COMMENTS

7.1 Ageing population is a social phenomenon that warrants careful consideration by the Government. While handling the growing demand for elderly services, the Government needs to work out how such services should be supported by public finance. In the Programme Plan, elderly persons' demand for LTC services was projected to shift gradually from RCS to CCS (see **para. 4.1**). In September 2013, SWD introduced the Pilot Scheme to test the provision of CCS under a new "money-following-the-user" mode. Based on the findings of our investigation, we consider that the operational arrangements for the Pilot Scheme have been enhanced in various ways with more obvious progress in recent years, but there is still room for improvement. Our comments and recommendations are set out below.

The Pilot Scheme Has Been in Operation and under Review for Years

7.2 SWD first adopted the "money-following-the-user" mode in the Pilot Scheme, aiming to enhance services through market competition among RSPs. From the perspective of public finance, the principles of "money-following-the-user", "affordable users pay" and "co-payment" can help achieve financial sustainability of CCS (see **paras. 5.12 and 5.13**). It has been almost a decade since the introduction of the Pilot Scheme in September 2013, during which Phase 3 of the scheme was implemented in October 2020. SWD explained that the market was not yet developed when the Pilot Scheme was initially introduced and there were not many RSPs (62 RSPs in number, see **Table 14)**. SWD had spent time to review the scheme and adopted various enhancement measures at different phases in order to explore how best to utilise the new mode and to enhance the scheme progressively (see **para. 5.14 and Table 21**).

7.3 In our opinion, as the operation of the Pilot Scheme is essentially different from that of traditional subsidised services, both the market and elderly persons needed time to understand and familiarise themselves with it. For Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme, the Sau Po Centre had indeed offered multiple views and suggestions regarding service delivery modes, eligibility criteria for RSPs, CCS voucher values, co-payment and means test mechanism, service targets and coverage, local collaboration

and strengthening of information technology system. Such views and suggestions were taken on board by SWD in formulating enhancement measures for the next phase of the scheme. Some of the measures such as extending the eligibility for RSPs to include private organisations, increasing the supply and diversity of services, expanding the coverage of the scheme from eight districts to all 18 districts throughout the territory and strengthening local collaboration could not be achieved immediately. Hence, we find it understandable for SWD to have taken a relatively long period of time to test the measures and operation of the Pilot Scheme for enhancement.

A Multi-pronged Approach Is Needed to Improve the Utilisation Rate

7.4 SWD's statistics (see **Table 6**) show that the utilisation rate (see Column (f) of **Table 6**), calculated as the percentage of the number of voucher holders actively using the services over the quota of vouchers, was around 60% in Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme, and that in Phase 3 increased from 59% in 2020/21 to 78% in 2021/22 and further to 86% as at the end of December 2022. The utilisation rate has been gradually improving, which should be attributable to the fact that since Phase 3, SWD has started to invite all eligible elderly persons on the Central Waiting List to apply for CCS vouchers (see **para. 2.10**) and to issue more vouchers than the quota under the scheme (see Column (e) of **Table 6**). While the quota for Phase 3 was set at 8,000, there were 10,046 valid vouchers issued by SWD as at the end of December 2022, of which 6,851 were being used by participants to purchase services offered by RSPs. SWD's proactive steps to send invitation letters to eligible elderly persons and issue CCS vouchers have been effective in lifting the utilisation rates, thus better utilising the voucher quota. We find SWD's practice worthy of recognition.

7.5 On the other hand, we notice that:

- Information in Columns (c) and (d) of **Table 6** reveals that the number of voucher holders actively using the services in each year during Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme accounted for only 60% to 70% of the total number of voucher holders in the respective year. For example, the statistics as at the end of December 2022 show that only 68% of the voucher holders had used CCS vouchers while 32% of them (3,195 persons) had not used the services. In 2021 and 2022, SWD had explored why voucher holders did not use the services and found that about 75% to 90% of the holders said they had no immediate needs for voucher services and the remaining said there was no suitable RSP or service package for them. SWD had followed up on such findings (see **paras. 2.40 and 2.41**).

- SWD pointed out that the situation was similar for traditional subsidised LTC services in that some elderly persons might not use the services granted to them. Take the year 2022/23 (as at the end of December 2022) as an example, relevant statistics show that 14% and 23% of applicants for traditional subsidised home-based services and traditional subsidised

centre-based services respectively had not used the services granted to them. Hence, the situation that the applicants did not use the services granted does not occur only in the case of CCS voucher services.

- **Table 5** shows that among those voucher holders who left Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme, 51% did so because they would be or had been allocated traditional subsidised CCS or subsidised or private RCS, while 36.5% of the cases of discontinued use of vouchers was due to death of holders.

Based on the above analysis, many elderly persons waitlisted for LTC services on the Central Waiting List actually applied for CCS vouchers to meet potential needs before they were granted traditional subsidised services. In fact, this is in line with SWD's positioning of CCS vouchers as an additional option for elderly persons waitlisted for services on the Central Waiting List to receive assistance with the CCS vouchers issued when necessary (see **para. 5.18**).

7.6 As SWD pointed out, RSPs apply for reimbursement of subsidies on an accountable basis under the Pilot Scheme. Unused CCS vouchers, therefore, will not waste public money or occupy resources of RSPs (see **para. 2.44**). We understand that unused CCS vouchers will not obstruct the turnover of vouchers or SWD's issuance of vouchers to elderly persons in need as long as the voucher holders do not outnumber the voucher quota. Nevertheless, for maintaining and even improving the utilisation rate of CCS vouchers, we consider that SWD should continue with its endeavours to encourage eligible elderly persons newly added to the Central Waiting List to apply for CCS vouchers, and regularly (e.g. once every year) approach those voucher holders who have not used the vouchers received. This would facilitate SWD's collation of information for analysis and identification of potential areas for service improvement, while enabling the Department to re-examine the elderly persons' service needs in collaboration with the responsible workers, so as to help them better utilise the vouchers, including choosing suitable RSPs or service packages.

7.7 We also recommend that SWD obtain from RSPs the waiting list for their services, approach other RSPs and the voucher holders on the list and attempt to make matching suggestions so that those elderly persons can receive necessary services as soon as possible. SWD has agreed to consider this recommendation, but finds it necessary to discuss the actual implementation mechanism with RSPs first because the Department currently contacts mainly elderly persons, not the RSPs.

7.8 Moreover, we notice that one of the Sau Po Centre's recommendations for the Pilot Scheme is to allow voucher holders to purchase services from more than one RSP concurrently (see **Table 21**) for better flexibility under the Pilot Scheme. SWD indicated that the Department was working on the details of the measure, which is expected to be implemented in the third quarter of 2023. We recommend that SWD expedite its study and test for early implementation so that elderly persons can enjoy services under the scheme more flexibly, thereby improving the utilisation rate of CCS vouchers.

Supply of Centre-based Services Should be Increased

7.9 According to SWD's information, 250 RSPs offered a total of 12,689 places for home care service (home-based services) in Phase 3 of the Pilot Scheme as at the end of December 2022 (see **para. 4.7**). **Table 16** shows that there were totally 4,712 elderly persons using home-based services and the mixed mode of centre-based and home-based services offered by RSPs in their respective districts, while 4,323 elderly persons were waitlisted for home-based services on the Central Waiting List. We assume that the sum of these two types of elderly (i.e. 9,035 persons) represents the aggregate demand for home-based services. At present, the capacity of home-based services can abundantly accommodate the needs of voucher users and those on the waiting list. Even if the quota of 8,000 vouchers is fully used on home-based services, coupled with the 4,323 waitlisted elderly persons, the existing provision of services is still adequate.

7.10 As regards the local supply and demand, data in Item (e) of the table below show that some districts had excessive demand for home-based services from elderly persons using the services provided by RSPs in their respective districts and those residing in the districts and waitlisted for such services. Those districts were the Central and Western District, Islands District, Wong Tai Sin District, Sha Tin District, the North District and Yuen Long District. On the contrary, Wan Chai District, Sham Shui Po District, Kowloon City District and Yau Tsim Mong District appeared to have surplus supply of home-based services (each with over 500 places more than needed). Nevertheless, as many RSPs offer cross-district home-based services to elderly persons from various districts (see **Table 17**) and RSPs cannot charge users extra cost for travelling to the districts they are allowed to serve (see **para. 4.15**), using cross-district services does not incur extra transportation and time costs for elderly users. We believe that the supply and demand of home-based services can maintain a balance among districts given service places of RSPs of different districts can flexibly complement one another.

Table 24: Supply and demand of home-based services in different districts (As at the end of December 2022)

District	No. of RSPs	No. of home-based service places Note 1 (a)	No. of voucher holders using home-based services in that district Note 2 (b)	No. of persons waitlisted for home-based services on Central Waiting List Note 3 (c)	Total no. of persons in need of home-based services (d)=(b)+(c)	Service shortfall (e)=(a)-(d)
Eastern	20	1,004	401	440	841	163
Wan Chai	11	1,100	452	128	580	520
Central and Western	6	215	113	173	286	-71
Southern	12	382	127	203	330	52
Islands	2	50	13	101	114	-64
Kwun Tong	22	970	494	442	936	34
Wong Tai Sin	17	716	418	318	736	-20
Sai Kung	8	465	171	148	319	146
Sham Shui Po	23	1,071	218	207	425	646
Kowloon City	18	1,245	325	143	468	777
Yau Tsim Mong	22	1,420	276	114	390	1,030
Sha Tin	14	635	303	495	798	-163
Tai Po	11	504	222	224	446	58
North	5	160	59	111	170	-10
Kwai Tsing	22	1,061	383	366	749	312
Tsuen Wan	15	855	437	188	625	230
Tuen Mun	16	718	262	332	594	124
Yuen Long	6	118	38	190	228	-110
Total	**250**	**12,689**	**4,712**	**4,323**	**9,035**	**3,654**

(Note 1: RSPs have not set any limit on the local and cross-district service places.
Note 2: Figures include cross-district users of services in that district, plus local and cross-district users of mixed-mode services.
Note 3: Figures exclude elderly persons classified as inactive cases due to participation in the Pilot Scheme.)

7.11 As at the end of December 2022, 4,191 places for day care centre services (centre-based services) were provided under the Pilot Scheme (see **para. 4.7**). **Table 16** shows that while there were 3,518 users of centre-based services and mixed mode of home-based and centre-based services, 1,771 persons were waitlisted for centre-based services on the Central Waiting List, making up a total of 5,289 elderly persons in need of centre-based services. SWD explained that a place for centre-based services could be used by more than one voucher holder in different time slots or on different days (see **para. 4.9**). That means the total number of service places might not be insufficient to

meet the demand. In the absence of detailed information on the utilisation status of each service place, we could not comment on the actual situation of supply and demand of service places. Considering only the total number of users, there is still a surplus of service places for the time being.

7.12 As regards the supply and demand of centre-based services at district level, data in Item (e) of the table below show the remaining service places in different districts. Assuming that one service place can accommodate 1.5 elderly persons, there was a deficit of service places in six districts, namely the Eastern District, the Southern District, Wong Tai Sin District, Sha Tin District, Islands District and Yuen Long District, out of the 18 districts over the territory. This shows that the supply of centre-based service places of those districts could not meet the demand of voucher holders using centre-based services of RSPs of those districts and elderly persons waitlisted for such services in those districts. This observation is generally in line with SWD's data on the number of voucher holders in various districts using cross-district centre-based services (see **Table 18**). On the other hand, in Sham Shui Po District, Yau Tsim Mong District, Kowloon City District and Kwai Tsing District, the supply of relevant services is relatively sufficient.

Table 25: Supply and demand of centre-based services in different districts (As at the end of December 2022)

District	No. of RSPs	No. of centre-based service places Note 1 (a)	No. of voucher holders using centre-based services in that district Note 2 (b)	No. of persons waitlisted for centre-based services on Central Waiting List Note 3 (c)	No. of persons in need of centre-based services (d)=(b)+(c)	Service shortfall (e)=(a)x1.5-(d) Note 4
Eastern	20	267	299	276	575	-174.5
Wan Chai	11	161	114	31	145	96.5
Central and Western	6	80	69	40	109	11
Southern	12	134	98	130	228	-27
Islands	2	20	16	27	43	-13
Kwun Tong	22	497	538	115	653	92.5
Wong Tai Sin	17	382	365	216	581	-8
Sai Kung	8	192	167	119	286	2
Sham Shui Po	23	320	155	33	188	292
Kowloon City	18	283	135	92	227	197.5
Yau Tsim Mong	22	219	89	45	134	194.5
Sha Tin	14	429	353	308	661	-17.5

District	No. of RSPs	No. of centre-based service places Note 1 (a)	No. of voucher holders using centre-based services in that district Note 2 (b)	No. of persons waitlisted for centre-based services on Central Waiting List Note 3 (c)	No. of persons in need of centre-based services (d)=(b)+(c)	Service shortfall (e)= (a)x1.5-(d) Note 4
Tai Po	11	173	221	26	247	12.5
North	5	112	94	29	123	45
Kwai Tsing	22	364	245	49	294	252
Tsuen Wan	15	259	256	41	297	91.5
Tuen Mun	16	209	217	95	312	1.5
Yuen Long	6	90	87	99	186	-51
Total	**250**	**4,191**	**3,518**	**1,771**	**5,289**	**997.5**

(Note 1: RSPs have not set any limit on the local and cross-district service places.
Note 2: Figures include cross-district users of services in that district, plus local and cross-district users of mixed-mode services.
Note 3: Figures exclude elderly persons classified as inactive cases due to participation in the Pilot Scheme.
Note 4: Calculation is based on the assumption that one centre-based service place can be used by 1.5 elderly persons.)

7.13 We understand that there are more constraints in transport arrangements and premises for day care centres. For example, RSPs must provide an indoor area of 5.25 square metres for each place of centre-based services. Hence, only a few RSPs could offer cross-district centre-based services (**Table 17**). The centre-based service supply of traditional subsidised services is subject to similar constraints. As such, it is more difficult to balance the supply and demand of centre-based services at district level.

7.14 SWD regularly examines the adequacy of CCS voucher services in various districts and provides updates on local service availability in sharing sessions and briefings for RSPs. Besides, SWD encourages organisations to offer more services and extend their service modes in districts with a larger elderly population or greater service demand (see **para. 4.12**). In view of the insufficiency of centre-based service places in a number of districts, coupled with the Government's initiative to regularise the Pilot Scheme and increase the quota progressively (see **para. 5.19**), we recommend that SWD continue to regularly provide up-to-date statistics and information about the supply and demand of CCS voucher services in each district to existing and potential RSPs. SWD should also invite more organisations to offer services or extend the modes and coverage of services in districts with keen demand so that more centre-based service places can be provided to address the needs of local or cross-district elderly users.

7.15 For analysing the supply and demand at district level, this Office has requested SWD to provide statistics on the number of active voucher holders residing in each district. SWD explained that local supply and demand of services have been presented in the number of service places provided by RSPs in the district and the number of voucher holders using local service places (including both elderly persons living in that district or those coming from other districts). The Department also pointed out that such analysis should not rely on one single factor such as the difference between the number of active voucher users living in each district and the service places provided in that district. Currently, SWD takes into account a number of factors when analysing the local supply and demand of services. These factors include the size of the elderly population, the median household income, the number of inactive voucher holders (categorised by the address of voucher holders), the number of voucher holders using service provided in a district (including elderly persons living in that district and those coming from other districts), the utilisation rates of RSPs' services and changes in the rates of each district.

7.16 We accept SWD's view that whether the supply of services could meet the demand should not be judged by one single factor like the number of active voucher holders residing in a district but using services in other districts. We also find it reasonable for the Department to have used the aforesaid data and information to examine the local supply and demand of services. Nevertheless, we consider that the number of active voucher users residing in each district should reflect more directly the local demand for CCS voucher services. As a matter of fact, the number of inactive voucher holders of each district (categorised by the address of voucher holders) could only reflect the local demand indirectly because most of the inactive voucher holders do not have immediate needs for such services (see **paras. 2.40 and 2.41**). Moreover, the number of voucher holders using services provided in a district (including elderly persons residing in that district and those coming from other districts) has its limitation because that number of voucher holders is unlikely to exceed the service places offered by RSPs in the district, making it hard to reflect any excessive demand for service places. If SWD considers that the above two pieces of data could reflect the local demand for services, then the number of active voucher holders residing in each district (including elderly persons using local services and those using cross-district services) should be regarded as even more significant in reflecting the local demand. We recommend that SWD incorporate such data in the analysis of the supply and demand of services at district level for a more comprehensive result.

Elderly Persons without Carers Should Be Given More Assistance

7.17 At present, SWD usually takes two to four weeks from the receipt of an application for CCS vouchers to complete the vetting of the application and inform the applicant of the result. For cases selected for household means test, SWD would notify applicants of the vetting result within 10 working days after receipt of all the documents required (see **para. 2.12**). We find SWD's processing time reasonable. Our case studies also revealed that SWD did complete the vetting of cases and send the notification letters to the applicants within the aforesaid time frame (see **para. 6.19**).

7.18 There are views that elderly persons may not understand the complicated operation of the Pilot Scheme. Hence, they do not know how to use the vouchers received, or they would purchase or use the wrong services. They may also be swindled to purchase unnecessary services by co-payment. As a result, some suggest that SWD introduce a case management system to the Pilot Scheme and assign an independent case manager to follow up on the care needs of each voucher holder, and assist the elderly persons and their carers to identify suitable RSPs and service packages. This Office has also received similar views from members of the public (see **para. 1.5**).

7.19 We notice that SWD had commented on case management approaches in the discussion paper submitted to the Legislative Council in 2012 before introducing the Pilot Scheme[11]:

> "In some countries which operate a similar voucher system, a case management approach is adopted for service matching, quality monitoring and cost control. The case manager will draw up a personal care plan for each elder having regard to his care needs, and will review his health conditions and update the plan on a regular basis… We (SWD) will consider extending the voucher scheme to elders with severe impairment and setting different voucher values in the second phase (of the Pilot Scheme). We (SWD) may then have to consider inviting impartial external parties to perform the functions of case management, making use of the standardised assessment tool developed in the first phase of the Pilot Scheme. We (SWD) will study the implications of adopting a case management approach in the provision of long-term care for elders, including the manpower implications, financial implications and its interface with the care need assessment under SCNAM(ES) (Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services)."

7.20 According to the existing arrangement of the Pilot Scheme, the RSPs selected by the voucher holders have to follow up on their care needs and arrange suitable services for them. RSPs should formulate an ICP for a voucher holder and devise a service package based on the wish of the elderly person and sign a service package agreement with him or her. After starting the service, RSPs should also review the care needs of the elderly persons at regular intervals (at least once every six months) so as to modify the services. The formulation, implementation and review of each voucher holder's ICP must be coordinated, monitored and recorded by the professionals of RSPs (i.e. enrolled or registered nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists or registered social workers) so that relevant records would be readily available for inspection (see **para. 2.26**).

7.21 SWD requires that RSPs must respect the choice and will of voucher holders in the aforesaid process. SWD has also set out guidelines on how RSPs should formulate and implement ICPs for voucher holders (see **para. 2.26**). When conducting

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[11] Paragraphs 21 and 23 of the paper for discussion by the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services on 13 February 2012.

service monitoring visits at the premises of RSPs, SWD's staff will randomly check the ICPs of voucher holders and review their reports and service records to ascertain whether the RSPs have provided services and completed the ICPs as agreed (see **para. 3.9**).

7.22 Moreover, SWD set up the Centralised Team in Phase 2 of the Pilot Scheme to support voucher holders in collaboration with responsible workers. SWD considered that compared with other external organisations, the Centralised Team, being familiar with the operation of the Pilot Scheme, should be able to support voucher holders and responsible workers in a more direct and focused manner (see **paras. 5.4 and 5.5**). Voucher holders and carers can approach responsible workers or the Centralised Team for assistance, which includes answering their enquiries, helping them to decide whether they should apply for CCS vouchers, selecting RSPs and service packages that best suit their needs, and helping elderly persons to switch RSPs where necessary (see **para. 5.6**).

7.23 When SWD writes to invite applications for joining the Pilot Scheme or issues the notification of issuance of voucher to elderly persons, and in case of new enrolments for RSPs' services, SWD will copy all relevant documents to the responsible workers to keep them informed of the latest progress of the elderly persons' applications and use of services (see **para. 5.7**).

7.24 Currently, there are more than 10,000 voucher holders under the Pilot Scheme. We understand that it requires tremendous manpower and resources to provide individual case management service to such a large number of elderly persons, no matter it is SWD or other organisations that take up the work. Having weighed the pros and cons, SWD decided that the responsibility of assisting voucher holders and following up on their LTC needs should be shared by the Centralised Team, responsible workers and RSPs, instead of assigning an independent third party to offer case management service. SWD must have taken manpower and financial factors into account before making the decision. In our opinion, the crux is whether the current mode can help elderly persons to make good use of CCS vouchers to meet their LTC needs.

7.25 The Centralised Team will proactively contact voucher holders on three particular occasions: one month after the elderly person has received but yet to use the vouchers (see **para. 2.14**); three months have passed but the elderly person has yet to use the vouchers (see **para. 2.39**); and when the elderly person quits the Pilot Scheme. The team will find out why voucher holders do not use the vouchers and offer them assistance where necessary. For example, the team can help the elderly persons to select suitable RSPs and service packages (see **para. 2.40**).

7.26 Each year, the Centralised Team handles thousands of enquiries from voucher holders, carers, responsible workers and RSPs, the majority of which are enquiries about the Pilot Scheme and how to apply for CCS vouchers, with the rest concerning the selection of suitable RSPs and service packages and switching RSPs, etc. (see **Table**

22). The number of enquiries decreased by 42% from 5,311 in 2017 to 3,064 in 2022.

7.27 Based on the information mentioned in **paragraphs 7.22, 7.25 and 7.26**, the work of the Centralised Team is different from what case management is generally perceived. Nevertheless, the team's work can indeed help voucher holders or carers to a certain extent to make the best out of the voucher services and assist them in resolving problems with using vouchers, including finding services that best suit their needs. In recent years, the Centralised Team has received fewer enquiries, indicating that elderly persons and stakeholders concerned have become more familiar with the operation and usage of CCS vouchers.

7.28 On the other hand, there have been fewer complaints against RSPs. SWD received only 18 complaints in the past five years, on average three to four complaints per year. Only nine of them were substantiated or partially substantiated (see **Table 11** and **para. 3.30**). During the same period, SWD did not receive any complaints about elderly persons not knowing how to use CCS vouchers, purchasing or using wrong services, or being swindled to purchase unnecessary services (see **para. 3.31**). This shows that the situation mentioned in the public views may be individual cases only (see **para. 7.18**).

7.29 Nevertheless, many elderly persons in Hong Kong do not have children or carers, and they are in need of greater assistance from SWD or responsible workers when using CCS vouchers. In our opinion, as the Centralised Team has reduced workload on handling enquiries, it should have more capacity to support voucher holders without children or carers. For example, the Centralised Team could telephone them regularly in addition to the three occasions mentioned in **paragraph 7.25** to understand how they have been using the vouchers and offer assistance where necessary. We are pleased to learn that SWD has agreed to this recommendation.

More Random Interviews Should be Arranged during Service Monitoring Visits

7.30 Each year, SWD carries out service monitoring visits at day care centres under RSPs and the home of users receiving home care services to monitor the service quality of RSPs. During the visits, SWD will examine relevant records, files and facilities, as well as conduct random interviews with users and check their service records, to ensure that RSPs have met all the requirements of SWD (see **paras. 3.9 to 3.12**). The Department has also formulated internal guidelines on the procedures for conducting service monitoring visits and a checklist to facilitate staff's discharge of duties and recording of the result (see **para. 6.1**). In the past five years, SWD issued only 21 notices of irregularity, on average four notices per year. SWD had handled the cases in accordance with the established procedures and confirmed that the RSPs concerned had rectified the irregularities (see **paras. 3.18 to 3.20 and Table 10**).

7.31 Our staff have observed how SWD staff performed service monitoring visits at day care centres and elderly users' home. We reckon that SWD's staff acted in accordance with the Department's guidelines and requirements and carefully examined

RSP's records and provision of services (see **paras. 6.2 and 6.14**). The elderly persons interviewed during our site inspections had positive comments on CCS vouchers (see **paras. 6.5 and 6.11**). We consider that SWD's mechanism of service monitoring visits operated smoothly in general and served its purposes.

7.32 During the service monitoring visits, SWD will randomly interview on the spot one to three users of day care centres or home care services or their carers to gather their feedback on CCS vouchers, service providers and services (see **para. 3.13**). In our view, the interviews enable SWD to learn about the experience and views of voucher users as well as their genuine comments on the Pilot Scheme, service providers and services, beyond the paper records kept by RSPs. This will help SWD monitor the service quality of RSPs and even gauge public feedback on the effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme.

7.33 We, however, notice that SWD interviewed only one voucher holder of centre-based services in nearly all the service monitoring visits of the past two years (see **Table 8**). Regarding home-based services, two voucher holders were interviewed in about 20% to 30% of the service monitoring visits (see **Table 9**). According to SWD, conduct of random interviews with voucher holders or carers during the visits is only one of the Department's means of collecting their feedback. When processing the reimbursement of subsidies to RSPs every month, SWD's staff will also proactively contact voucher holders with heavy usage of services to understand their situation. That said, since SWD's service monitoring visits are unannounced and carried out annually, and conducting random interviews with users is an essential part of the process, improving the effectiveness of service monitoring visits should be more conducive to the enhancement of the overall service quality. Hence, we recommend that SWD instruct its staff to conduct random interviews with at least two users or their carers during service monitoring visits for both centre-based services and home-based services, so as to step up its monitoring of the service quality without requiring excessive additional manpower and resources. We are pleased to learn that SWD has agreed to this recommendation.

7.34 Currently, SWD does not place any opinion survey forms at the premises of RSPs to allow elderly persons or carers to make identified or anonymous submission of views on CCS vouchers, service providers or services. We, therefore, recommend that SWD introduce this measure to facilitate its monitoring of RSPs' performance.

Reasons for Switching RSPs by Voucher Holders Should Be Examined

7.35 Under the Pilot Scheme, voucher holders can freely switch RSPs based on their needs without obtaining SWD's approval (see **para. 2.27**). This is one of the initiatives making CCS voucher services more flexible than traditional subsidised services. SWD's information shows that between the years of 2017/18 and 2022/23, about 200 to 500 voucher holders switched RSPs each year (see **Table 4**). SWD, however, has not maintained statistical information on the reasons for their change.

7.36 Voucher holders may switch RSPs for a number of reasons such as moving home, transportation or personal preference. It may also be due to the service quality of the original RSPs. As RSPs are required to notify SWD of any voucher holders quitting the services or any new enrolments (see **paras. 2.28 and 5.7**), we find it feasible for SWD to approach the voucher holders concerned upon receiving such notifications in order to understand their reasons for switching RSPs. In case it is due to the service quality of the original RSP, SWD should duly follow up and urge the RSP concerned for improvement.

Updates on Vacancy for Service Places Should Be Regularly Provided on SWD's Elderly Information Website and Its Function Should Be Upgraded

7.37 At present, elderly persons and carers can browse SWD's Elderly Information Website for information on eligibility, application method and scope and mode of services of the Pilot Scheme. The website's search engine allows elderly persons and carers to look for suitable RSPs by district and service delivery mode, and get the contact information, the number of service places and vacancy as well as service items of RSPs (see **para. 2.23**). By using an exclusive account established by SWD, RSPs are required to update the vacancy for service places on the website at least on a fortnightly basis in case of changes in the availability of services. If RSPs do not update their vacancy for service places, the website system will automatically send an email reminder to alert them to do so in a timely manner (see **para. 3.8**).

7.38 During our direct investigation between April and May 2022, we used the search engine on SWD's Elderly Information Website to randomly check information about 10 RSPs and found that the information on the number of service places and vacancy of five of these RSPs were last updated three months to more than two years ago. As regards such long delay in updating the said information, SWD explained that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the provision of services by some RSPs, and the vacancy for service places had remained unchanged for a long period of time. Accordingly, the RSPs needed not update the relevant information on the website.

7.39 In our opinion, even if the vacancy for service places had indeed remained unchanged for a long time, the RSPs should still have provided relevant information via the exclusive account according to the time frame set by SWD. The Elderly Information Website would then have shown the time of the latest update, thus avoiding a misunderstanding that the information had expired. We recommend that SWD require RSPs to provide timely updates on the vacancy for service places. SWD should also step up its monitoring of RSPs' compliance with the requirement. As a further measure, SWD should modify the functions of the website so that voucher holders or carers can check the real-time vacancy for service places, saving them the trouble of calling individual RSPs for such information.

7.40 In this regard, SWD indicated that it is exploring how the information technology system can be improved and the feasibility of developing an electronic platform for providing service and information to applicants or voucher holders more

conveniently. Voucher holders can then process real-time checks on information about their vouchers and service records as well as the vacancy for service places of RSPs. On the other hand, RSPs can also update the vacancy for service places via the electronic platform and submit relevant documents and applications for reimbursement of subsidies to SWD so as to streamline the administrative work. The enhancement measure for the system is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2023 (see **para. 5.9**).

Make Better Use of Newspaper or Television Interviews for Publicity

7.41 Since the launch of the Pilot Scheme, SWD has been using various channels to promote CCS voucher services among eligible elderly persons and members of the public and explain the details and key features of the Pilot Scheme, including holding press conferences, publishing press releases and blogs, accepting newspapers and television interviews, releasing information on SWD's website and distributing leaflets and CD-ROMs at district elderly community centres, neighbourhood elderly centres and day care centres for the elderly. SWD has also cited real cases in the newspapers and television interviews to highlight the advantages of CCS vouchers to elderly persons and their carers. Between 2013 and 2022, SWD organised 77 district-based sessions to promote CCS voucher services to responsible workers and provide updates on the Pilot Scheme (see **paras. 3.35 and 3.36**).

7.42 That said, we notice that the major publicity means of the Pilot Scheme have been press releases, articles on the Secretary for Labour and Welfare's blog and promotional speeches of government officials when they attended events. There was only one occasion where the Pilot Scheme was publicised through newspaper and television interviews with users and carers. We consider that newspaper and television interviews can reach more audience and help elderly persons and carers better understand the advantages of CCS vouchers (for example, the flexibility that elderly persons can enjoy in arranging services and switching RSPs) through real cases. Hence, this kind of publicity should be more effective. We recommend that SWD consider arranging more newspaper or television interviews with real cases cited to promote voucher services among elderly persons and carers, so as to attract more eligible elderly persons to use such services.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

7.43 Overall, The Ombudsman has made the following recommendations to SWD:

(1) continue with its endeavours to encourage eligible elderly persons newly added to the Central Waiting List to apply for CCS vouchers, and regularly (e.g. once every year) approach those voucher holders who have not used the vouchers received in order to identify potential areas for service improvement and re-examine elderly persons' service needs

in collaboration with responsible workers and help them choose suitable RSPs or service packages (see **para. 7.6**);

(2) obtain from RSPs the list of elderly persons waiting for their services, approach other RSPs and the voucher holders on the list and attempt to make matching suggestions so that those elderly persons can receive necessary services as soon as possible (see **para. 7.7**);

(3) expedite its study and test on allowing voucher holders to purchase services from more than one RSP concurrently for early implementation so that elderly persons can enjoy services under the scheme more flexibly (see **para. 7.8**);

(4) continue to regularly provide up-to-date statistics and information about the supply and demand of CCS voucher services in each district to existing and potential RSPs, and invite more organisations to offer services or extend the modes and coverage of services in districts with keen demand so that more centre-based service places can be provided to local or cross-district elderly users (see **para. 7.14**);

(5) incorporate the number of active voucher holders residing in each district (including elderly persons using local services and those using cross-district services) in the analysis of the supply and demand of services at district level for a more comprehensive result (see **para. 7.16**);

(6) provide more support to voucher holders without children or carers by, for example, proactively telephoning them on occasions other than the standard contact time points mentioned in **paragraph 7.25**, so as to understand how they have been using the vouchers and offer assistance where necessary (see **para. 7.29**);

(7) instruct its staff to conduct random interviews with at least two users or carers during service monitoring visits for both centre-based services and home-based services, so as to step up the monitoring of the service quality (see **para. 7.33**);

(8) place opinion survey forms at the premises of RSPs to allow elderly persons or carers to make identified or anonymous submission of views on CCS vouchers, service providers or services to SWD (see **para. 7.34**);

(9) upon receiving notification of voucher holders' leaving the original RSPs, approach the voucher holders concerned to understand their reasons for switching RSPs. In case it is due to the service quality of the original RSPs, SWD should duly follow up on the matters (see **para. 7.36**);

(10) require RSPs to provide timely updates on the vacancy for service places and step up the monitoring of their compliance with the requirement. As a further measure, SWD should modify the functions of the Elderly Information Website to allow voucher holders or carers to check the real-time vacancy for service places, saving them the trouble of calling individual RSPs for such information (see **para. 7.39**); and

(11) consider arranging more newspaper or television interviews with real cases cited to promote voucher services among elderly persons and carers, so as to attract more eligible elderly persons to use such services (see **para. 7.42**).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.44 The Ombudsman thanks SWD for its full cooperation in the course of this investigation. We are also grateful for the views provided by members of the public and organisations who are concerned about this topic.

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